

INDIA
THE CRITICAL YEARS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Between the Lines

INDIA

THE CRITICAL YEARS

KULDIP NAYAR

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*Dedicated to the common man who
has waited patiently for the fruits
of peaceful changes in the country.*

Preface

MY FIRST BOOK, *Between the Lines*, almost landed me in trouble. My friends in the Home Ministry nearly threw the Official Secrets Act at me but I am glad wiser counsels prevailed, and I hope that they will again prevail when they see this book: *The Critical Years*.

Official chagrin and even anger I can understand but what distresses me is the charge that I violated the confidence placed in me by some of those who figured in my first book. I am afraid the same charge will be made again after they read this book. In explanation, I can only say that I did not play false to the persons who gave me "information" or to political leaders and Government officials I talked to at length; I have with me the text of their interviews.

As for "secrets", I feel that as a journalist I owe it to the people to divulge what happens behind the scenes even at the risk of embarrassing the Government or its representatives who withhold important information for fear of being exposed. Democracy thrives in the open, not in closed rooms.

Often "secrets" are for the convenience of some. I remember while working with the Central Home Ministry as Information Officer, I would get cyclostyled papers, marked "Top Secret" and sealed in an envelope within another envelope, purporting to give information about the activities of political parties. After going through them for a few weeks, I requested the Ministry to stop them; they were nothing but summaries of reports appearing in provincial papers which senior officials did not see and I had to as Information Officer.

The book opens with the split in the Congress party and flows into the second chapter on India's economic progress since it is claimed that the leaders parted company because of ideological differences. The third chapter is on India's relations with foreign countries, with the accent on the Soviet Union and the fourth on the domestic scene, beginning with the aftermath of States reorganization until the announcement of the mid-term poll.

It is true that the book has not covered all the happenings in the past 10 years. But then my aim was not to make it a catalogue. Some who have read *Between the Lines* may find a few portions repetitive. But a book on the last decade could not have ignored important events like the battle of succession to the Indian Prime Ministership, the devaluation of the rupee or the Chinese attack on India in October 1962. I have, however, given as much new information as I have been able to get since writing my first book.

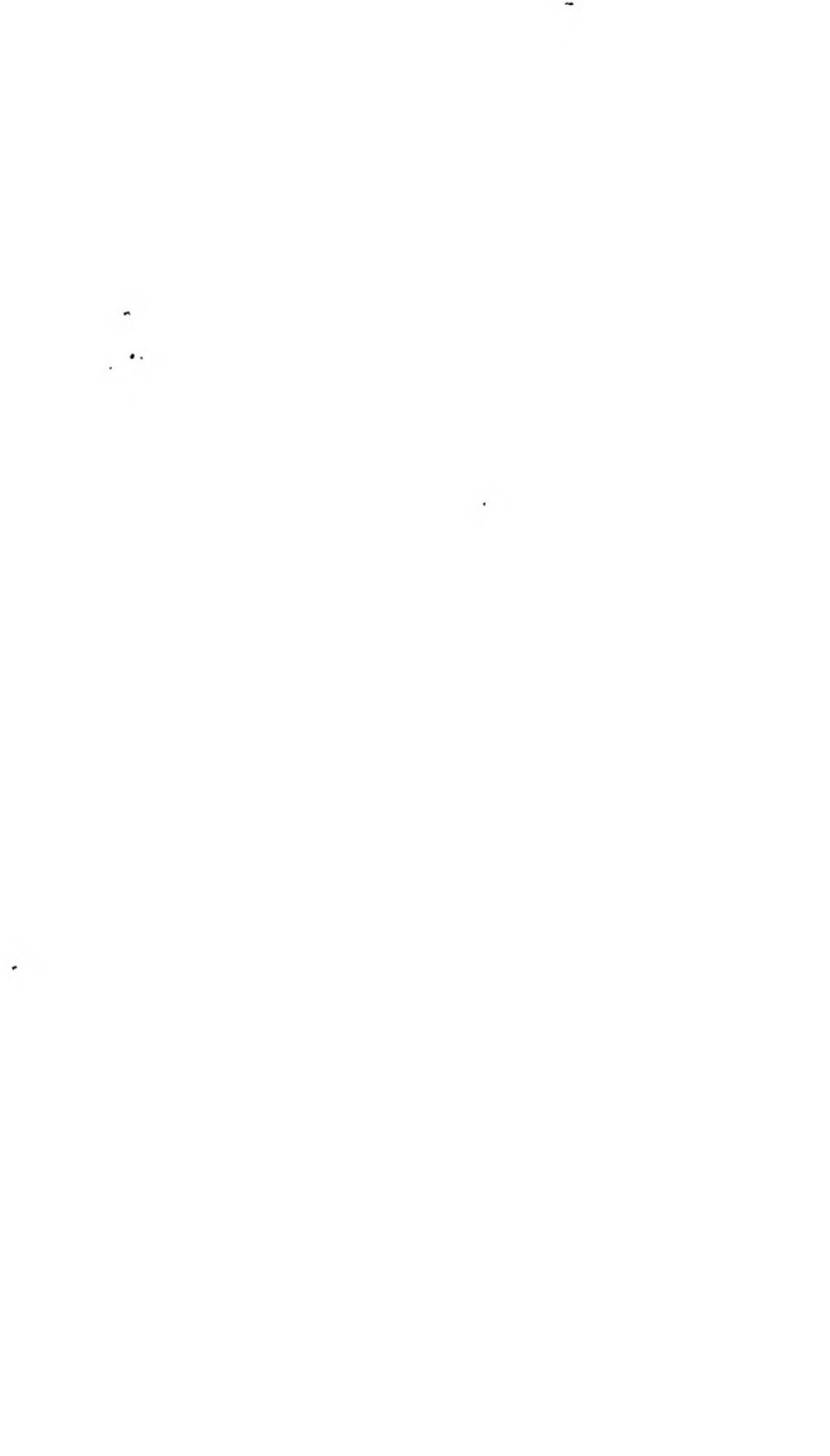
This book has been primarily written for the British publishers (Weidenfeld Nicolson), who commissioned me to tell the story of India's achievements and failures during the crucial decade, 1960-70.

I am grateful to my colleagues, Mr Prakasa Rao and Mr V. Achutha Menon, who gave me valuable suggestions, to Mr Dilip Mukerjee, who went through the second chapter—Economics of Ideology—and to Mr M.L. Kotru for going through the proofs. I must also express my thanks to my Secretaries, Mrs G. Barrett, Miss A. Ahluwallia, Mr T.N. Khanna and Mr K.S. Rao.

KULDIP NAYAR

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CHAPTER 1

The Great Split

IN AN OVERFURNISHED ROOM in New Delhi eleven men in white sat behind a bare table, on the mild sunny day of 12 November 1969, to hold an inquisition. They were the high priests of the Indian National Congress that had ruled India for twenty-two years after the British left.

On trial in absentia was the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, who some of them believed was planning to 'sell' India to Russia. The charge was indiscipline and defiance of the party leadership.

But more than the charge what united them was their humiliation at her hands. Most of them had known Mrs Gandhi as a child; they had watched her grow into a woman; they had helped her succeed Lal Bahadur Shastri* as Prime Minister when he died in office in January 1966. And now she had turned against them, had questioned their leadership and had tried to make them look small. They could not stomach all that; she must go.

The formalities were soon over. They found Mrs Gandhi guilty of violating the organization's discipline. The decision was to excommunicate her and ask the party members in Parliament to elect a new leader.

The pronouncement of the judgment was deferred. Not that there was an on-the-hink realization that the ousting of Mrs Gandhi would split the country's only viable, broadbased political party with which was intertwined India's stability and parliamentary democracy.

*Shastri was not the name of a caste but a degree in the Hindi language.

So confident of their strength were they—these bosses who had controlled the party as a Syndicate of king-makers for long—that they could not but think that Mrs Gandhi would try for a rapprochement.

A last-minute appeal for clemency was awaited, though many at the table were not in a relenting mood, least of all Morarji Desai, who was Deputy Prime Minister until four months earlier when Mrs. Gandhi stripped him of his Finance portfolio and forced him to resign from the Cabinet.

'There is no use waiting. In fact, we should have turned her out a long time ago, but you never listened to me,' he said. Desai is a seventy-five-year-old puritan who has the reputation of being anti-drinking, anti-left, and anti-English language.

He was backed by his one-time political adversary from the South, Kamaraj Nadar, an odd Leftist in that group of Rightists. In his far from perfect English Kamaraj said: 'Early action useful; never thought she would go so far defying the party.'

He still did not like to be on the same side as Desai but he could not forgive her for discarding him after using him as a ladder to climb to the office of Prime Ministership twice, once in 1966 when Shastri died and later in 1967 after the General Election.

The Congress party's titular head, sixty-five-year-old moon-faced S. Nijalingappa, whom Mrs Gandhi wanted to oust, agreed. 'She has become too dictatorial and she always harps on the fact that she is the Prime Minister as if others are nothing.' It was not for the first time that he was making this observation; he had written in the same vein in his personal diary. The entry for 15 May 1969 read:

During the course of our talks for the second time she asserted: 'I am the Prime Minister of India.' I am making fun of her fresh assertion of what she had said some time back—as a woman she wants to repeat it.

Nijalingappa also recalled that nearly four months earlier, on 23 July, he had written in his diary after meeting Asoka Mehta, once a Central Minister in Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet but now opposed to her: 'Asoka Mehta wants the woman to go as she would sell the country to Russia. This is the feeling among many.'

Affluent-looking Sadashiv Kanoji Patil from the rich mill area of Bombay had repeated many times before that 'even Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet personnel have to be approved by Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin.'

Now he said: 'There is a link between her and the Russian Embassy through her Secretary, Haksar, who was a Communist Party member at one time. Every second or third day a coded message comes from Moscow which is decoded at the Embassy and sent to him to be passed on to Mrs Gandhi. No record is kept.'

Patil, a former Central Minister, was known for his pro-American views. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, had often used him as a bridge between New Delhi and Washington. 'I gave her Rs. 3,20,000 to fight the election. She has not returned even the suitcase in which I had sent the money,' Patil alleged later in an interview with me.

Three others in the group, the two General Secretaries of the party, Sadiq Ali—a Muslim member who had risen from office clerk to political leader—and Pendakanti Venkatasubbiah of Andhra Pradesh, and elephant-like Atulya Ghosh from India's Eastern State, West Bengal, were mostly silent, listening to the rest and sipping tea which had been ordered a second time.

Only K.C. Abraham, from India's southernmost State of Kerala, was optimistic about a settlement. As a mediator he seemed confident that some way would be found to keep the Congress party united and he pleaded for time.

Of all people, it was Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon, a former Defence Minister known for his pro-Communist views, who had put him on the conciliation job on the plea that India might disintegrate if the Congress party split.

Dr Ram Subbag Singh, a former Central Minister who had earned a doctorate in journalism from Missouri University in America, was in favour of immediate action. 'Had Mrs Gandhi been sincere about keeping the party united, she would not have organized a revolt against Nijalingappaji', he said. ('ji' is a suffix which Indians use to show respect.)

Gnome-like Chandra Bhan Gupta, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest State to which Mrs Gandhi belongs, Hitendra Desai, Chief Minister of Gujarat, which is a stronghold

of Morarji Desai, and Virendra Patil, Chief Minister of Mysore, from where Nijalingappa hails, reported on the abortive compromise efforts which the Chief Ministers of ten States (where the Congress party was in power) had carried on until three that morning.

They had almost reached agreement on convening a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in six weeks to decide whether Nijalingappa should be allowed to finish his extended term as party President by the end of 1970 or made to retire on 31 December 1969, as originally envisaged. This would have given an opportunity for a trial of strength. Another suggestion was that leaders of the two groups should have a round-table discussion on all matters. Once old comrades confronted each other, it was argued, differences would go.

While the three Chief Ministers were reporting on the talks at the meeting of the eleven, the other ten of the Congress party's twentyone-member executive (Working Committee) were having their own discussions in the tastefully decorated drawing room of the Prime Minister, listening to the version of the seven Chief Ministers who were on Mrs Gandhi's side. There also the atmosphere was stiff. Some talked tough but the majority was not yet prepared for a split in the party.

Kashmir's Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq, once a camp follower of the Communist Party of India, was the most hawkish: 'We can have no truck with the other side; we represent progress, they reaction.' Perhaps he was not speaking so much as a Leftist as a Muslim who considered the other side to be communal and chauvinistic.

Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister, Brahmananda Reddy, said: 'Madam Prime Minister, they must first owe unstinted allegiance to you.' Chief Minister Bansi Lal from unstable Haryana, a State created by amputating the eastern wing of the Sikh dominated Punjab to placate the Hindu Jats (agriculturists), sounded like saying : Amen.

Also dead against any compromise were the then Food Minister, Jagjivan Ram, a Harijan, the lowest caste among Hindus; the then Industries Minister, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, a Muslim who was blamed for having allowed infiltration from East Pakistan into Assam to convert it into a Muslim-majority State,

and Uma Shankar Dixit, Mrs Gandhi's most trusted lieutenant who runs a daily newspaper in Delhi. They wanted a new Congress party to be formed if they failed to gain complete control over the old.

Kamalapati Tripathi, a staunch Uttar Pradesh Brahmin who had come to the meeting straight from *Puja* (prayers), the saffron mark fresh on his forehead, was against a patchwork peace. The 'enemy' must be vanquished. But he warned Mrs Gandhi to get prepared for a *Kurukshestra** (a battle royal) in U.P. 'If I don't I shall have my head chopped off,' she replied.

C. Subramaniam, who had the diligence of a Civil Servant but not his loyalty, was happy that his one-time Chief Minister, Kamaraj, in whose Cabinet he had served as Education Minister, was on the other side. Mrs Gandhi had once remarked that Subramaniam did not know even the elements of politics but he was the only one she had to counter Kamaraj's influence in Tamil Nadu.

The then Foreign Minister, Dinesh Singh, a member of Mrs Gandhi's inner circle known as the 'Kitchen Cabinet', believed that had he not gone to attend the U.N. General Assembly session in New York in July, the present situation would not have arisen. He and the then Sikh Defence Minister, Swaran Singh—both lightweights in politics—were in favour of a compromise but without giving in on the fundamentals. None asked them to define these fundamentals nor did they do so on their own. They did not want to take any risk; both had gained in politics by knowing which side their bread was buttered.

The doves on Mrs Gandhi's side were Assam's B.P. Chaliha and Rajasthan's Mohankal Sukhadia, both fence-sitters, Madhya Pradesh's Shyama Charan Shukla, whose head was with Mrs Gandhi and heart with her opponents, and Maharashtra's V.P. Naik. All four were in favour of giving an opportunity to Nijalingappa to show his strength.

But they had got stuck on the charge of indiscipline and anti-party activities that the other side had levelled against Mrs Gandhi. The previous night they seemed to be veering round to the suggestion that the question of indiscipline be raised at the very

*A war mentioned in the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* in pre-historic days.

first meeting of the leaders of both sides, but that morning, sensing hostility to holding talks without the charge being dropped, they had changed their stance.

The then Home Minister, Yeshwant Balwantrao Chavan, who had earlier flirted with the other side and had now become more loyal than the king, said that he for one would not take part in any negotiations until the show-cause notice against the Prime Minister was withdrawn.

Mrs Gandhi sat fiddling with a necklace of beads which a holy mother (*mata*) had given her to wear during days of crisis. She was peeved over the charge of indiscipline but was not against a compromise if her supremacy remained unchallenged. They must accept her leadership—and her infallibility.

Strangely, there was no talk of principles or ideologies or of the other side being retrograde and reactionary—a plank which Mrs Gandhi had adopted to attack them. The crisis had now boiled down to withdrawal of the indiscipline charge against Mrs Gandhi. All feared the consequences of an open split in the party.

It was decided to telephone the other side in a last attempt to see if a way out could be found. Naik put through the call and told Patil in Marathi (the language of Maharashtra, their home State) that there could be no agreement unless the charge of indiscipline against Mrs Gandhi was dropped.

Patil repeated what Naik was saying to his colleagues. This was not part of the compromise formula, said Sadiq Ali. He was correct. The conditions listed at the Chief Ministers' meeting did not contain this; nor did the typed copies which the two sides had before them at that time.

Sadiq Ali contended that once the disciplinary charge was dropped, no action was possible against Mrs Gandhi if the talks failed. Kamaraj saw the point. 'No, the woman must explain,' he said. Nijalingappa tried to soft-pedal by saying that it was not a charge but only a complaint. He looked like wilting under pressure.

But Desai said: 'How can we withdraw the charge after what she has done to the party?' Kamaraj suggested a face-saving formula: three or four persons from either side should sit and discuss the crisis and find a solution.

Patil then told Naik, who was still on the telephone, that the charge of indiscipline would be withdrawn if and when the two sides met. Naik thought that it was a concession and reported to his colleagues somewhat optimistically the reply he had received. But he was mistaken. By this time it had become a question of prestige. Who should yield—the organization which the party bosses controlled or the parliamentary wing over which Mrs Gandhi presided?

* * *

Once a similar question confronted the Labour Party in the U.K., and Harold Laski had to eat his humble pie and accept Prime Minister Attlee's pre-eminence in the party's organizational matters. However, in India the situation was different. Here the organization had always guided the parliamentary wing and the party's Parliamentary Board decided who should be the Prime Minister or a State's Chief Minister.

In the past the party meant Nehru and Nehru meant the party; now Mrs Gandhi wanted her father's status. She could not accept a position where the party bosses would judge her or could arraign her before a disciplinary board. What then was there to talk about?

To strengthen the hardliners on Mrs Gandhi's side now came Dwarka Prasad Mishra, a Brahmin who had once called Jawaharlal Nehru a Communist but now befriended his daughter. His train was late but he was happy he was in time to stop all talk of a compromise.

As he told me later: 'I pressed for a split because I could see the Thakurs [non-Brahmins] going down and as a Brahmin I enjoyed the prospect'. (Nietzsche thought that the best blood in Germany was in peasant veins; Mishra thought it was in the Brahmin's. Mrs Gandhi, even though widow of a Parsi, Feroze Gandhi, was a pandit, a Brahmo.)

Mishra admonished Naik for seeking a compromise. 'Don't worry, they are not agreeing to it,' was Naik's reply.

Naik then rang the party bosses again to say that the consensus on their side was that there could be no talks unless the charge of indiscipline was dropped.

Desai, Kamaraj and Ghosh were not willing to give in on the

point of discipline. Were they to do so, who would any longer fear the 'Syndicate'? The two Chief Ministers, Gupta and Hitendra Desai, argued in favour of a softer line, but they were overruled. They were probably the only ones who could visualize how an open split at the Centre would affect their fortunes in the States; Mrs Gandhi's group would rally their opponents to pull them down.

The telephone bell rang again at the 'Syndicate' meeting. This time it was Sukhadia wanting to talk to Nijalingappa. The Congress party chief refused to take the call. He and his supporters were now confident of their strength and calculated that once Mrs Gandhi was ousted, the entire Congress party would rally round them.

How wrong they were! Mrs Gandhi had sensed after many reverses of the Congress party in the 1967 poll* that it would have to look different to win in the five-year later-poll. By parting company with them, she knew she could always appear as a person charting a different course. She must catch the imagination of the people. And this was what she did.

Naik again called and requested Patil to prevail on the others not to tell the Press anything for some time. He suggested that the Chief Ministers meet again.

They had been so near a solution that they could try again if only the question of disciplinary action could be got out of the way. But Desai was firm: 'We have been hoodwinked by this lady before. Never again.'

Nijalingappa was also adamant; he was the President of the Congress party and it did not matter if she was the Prime Mi-

*In the first two General Elections (1952 and 1957) the Congress party at the Lok Sabha retained the same percentage of seats, i.e. 74.5 per cent, but it was reduced to 72.9 per cent in the third (1962) and further reduced to 54.6 per cent in the fourth (1967). In terms of seats secured by the party, it secured, in 1952, 364 representing an overall majority of 239 over the combined 125-member opposition; in the 1957 Lok Sabha, the party had to its credit 371 seats representing an overall majority of 248 over the combined opposition consisting of 123 members; in 1962 it had a strength of 358, representing an overall majority of 225 over the combined opposition strength of 133. In the 1967 Lok Sabha it commanded only 281 representing an overall majority of 50 over the combined opposition strength of 230.

nister; she must answer the charges against her; people must know who was the boss.

'I have felt it my duty as the head of the organization to which we all have sworn loyalty and allegiance not to gloss over open breaches of discipline even though they flow from such a high source as the Prime Minister', he said pontifically.

Naik was told that the charge of indiscipline would be taken up at a meeting of the two sides; there could be no agreement before-hand. And when Mrs Gandhi's camp said that there would be no meeting, the 'Syndicate' decided to announce to the waiting nation that Mrs Gandhi had been expelled from the party.

By this time the crowd outside the Congress party's headquarters had thickened; news of the last-minute efforts had evoked hope. People wanted the party to stay together. It had given them a centrist force, neither Left nor Right. With its disruption, it was evident that both Left and Right would fatten themselves at the expense of the Congress party. The nation might be polarized; there would be two armed camps. People did not want that to happen.

Like the religion of nearly 80 per cent of Indians, Hinduism, which admits people of divergent beliefs ranging from atheists to idolators, the Congress party had in its fold men and women of conflicting ideologies; they argued, debated and even quarrelled but yet remained together. This platform gave the public a sense of security which it did not want to lose. Couldn't the Congress party stay as one and provide shelter like the banyan tree even though under it nothing grew? No other political party could take its place; its fragmentation meant insecurity, uncertainty and the end of democracy one day.

People's hopes were shattered when they heard of the ousting of Mrs Gandhi. The resolution expelling her had been drafted earlier but had been held back because first Abraham and then the Chief Ministers had stepped into the arena to attempt a compromise.

The country had, however, known the gist of the resolution a week earlier through a news agency message which Inder Gujral, the Minister of State for Information, had inspired to show that the party bosses had decided to oust Mrs Gandhi even before the conciliation efforts had begun.

The agency report included the name of Chavan among those against whom disciplinary action had been 'taken'. This was meant to bring the wavering Chavan completely on Mrs Gandhi's side. The story helped.

The release of the resolution was only a formality; yet a great fuss was made over it. Newspapermen had to line up, climb thirty steps up a staircase, reach a small room and sign a paper to get a cyclostyled copy.

The tone of the resolution was authoritative but dismal. It announced that the Congress party's Working Committee was 'regretfully obliged to remove Mrs Gandhi from the primary membership of the Congress organization for her deliberate act of defiance....'

With the removal from membership of the Congress party, the resolution said, 'Mrs Gandhi ceases to be the leader of the Congress party in Parliament. The Working Committee directs the Congress party in Parliament to take necessary steps immediately to elect a new leader'. The die was cast.

Outside a woman sobbed loudly over the 'death' of the eighty-six year-old Congress 'party. But others were more stoical. Differences between the organizational and parliamentary wings, between personalities, had become so acrimonious that the party had to break one day. But no one had thought that it would come so soon, that 12 November would be that fateful day.

* * *

The Congress party had gone to the brink and drawn back before. The Leftist and secular Jawaharlal Nehru and Rightist and pro-Hindu Sardar Patel had served as Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the same Cabinet after independence; each said and did things with which the other did not agree. Yet in January 1948, after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress party's mentor in the struggle for freedom, the two embraced with tears trickling down their cheeks.

Differences and reconciliations had occurred even earlier in the Congress party. In 1907 the nationals and liberals in the party quarrelled but made up years later. Again when Sub-

Chandra Bose,* a revolutionary, was elected party President. Mahatma Gandhi, a votary of non-violence, dissociated himself from the party. Bose's resignation brought about a rapprochement.

Soon after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru's nominee for the party Presidentship, Acharya Kripalani, then a liberal, was defeated by Sardar Patel's man, Purshottam Das Tandon, a Hindi language fanatic. Nehru refused to join Tandon's Working Committee and as a compromise Tandon had to resign.

Again in 1963 Nehru used a plan prepared by Kamaraj, then the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, to get rid of those whom he did not like from the Government. Kamaraj had suggested that some top leaders should leave their executive positions to work for and strengthen the organization.

Nehru seized the opportunity to drop men like Desai, Patil and Jagjivan Ram who had started talking against him. He thought that the drama of making eight Central Ministers and six Chief Ministers quit their posts would give a new look to the Congress party.

Behind these periodic clashes were personal ambitions and group rivalries. Ideology played only a marginal role, as it did now.

Internecine conflict had eaten up the reserves of goodwill and comaderie among the party members. There was nothing left for them to share. Mere togetherness could not pull them through the crisis this time. Nor was there a Nehru to silence them to submission.

Some recalled the words of Mahatma Gandhi that if ever the party 'engages in the ungainly skirmishes for power, it will find one morning that it is no more.'

When Mishra heard of the removal of Mrs Gandhi from the Congress organization, he said: 'Now the offensive begins.' And he meant it because he kept the pressure on until Mrs Gandhi formed a Congress party of her own.

*During the Second World War, Bose secretly slipped out of India and sought the assistance of the Axis Powers to free his country. He also organized abroad the Indian National Army. Before the end of the war he reportedly died in an air crash.

Mrs Gandhi was silent and showed no emotion. In fact, she had become unusually quiet after reading a news agency message that she had been ousted from the Congress party.

Her supporters declared that they represented the real Congress party and elected her their leader. They expected to cash in on her image as a person leading the young faction of the party in spite of some old hands like Jagjivan Ram, Mishra and Dixit in her train. (The party bosses were generally old.)

Mrs Gandhi's group replied with this statement: 'It is presumptuous on the part of these handful of men to take disciplinary action against the democratically elected leader of the people. Are we to submit to them [the party bosses] or clean the organization of these undemocratic and Fascist persons?'

Forgotten, alas, were the ideological differences, which Mrs Gandhi's group had been saying were the cause of the split. Mrs Gandhi sought to cover the lapse a day later by making a statement that they would endeavour to make the Congress party an effective instrument to realize the hopes and aspirations of the people.

She wanted to have the public on her side and made the clash of personalities look like a battle between a coterie and the people, between radicals and vested interests. There was no doubt that the party bosses appeared as men of yesterday.

There was nothing left except to pick up the pieces. Both groups met separately to assess their respective strength in Parliament, particularly in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House), where the battle was to be joined to capture the Government.

At a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, which Mrs Gandhi convened, the presence of 330 members (260 of them from the Lok Sabha out of the party's total strength of 429) was claimed. Foreign journalists counted only 240 at the meeting (it was for the first time that newspapermen were allowed to sit with the party members). One Watch and Ward official shouted 210 as the number present but he was quietened by his superiors.

But correspondents were told to stick to the number 330. This was aimed at demoralizing the opponents and to win over those who had been sitting on the fence.

We on *The Statesman* headlined the story, 'presence of 330

at meeting claimed'. I was informed that Mrs Gandhi did not like the headline. Later, at a public meeting, without mentioning our paper by name, she said that headlines in newspapers were suggested by proprietors.

There was no pressure from the Government, but it wanted to build up an atmosphere of strength for a psychological war. Many civil servants used their influence unashamedly and many papers toed the line.

The party bosses or the Syndicate, as they were popularly known, gave out a figure of seventy MPs (sixty Lok Sahha members) at their meeting. This was nearer the truth. On the eve of the meeting, Desai told me that they had expected more than 150 to attend the meeting. But when it came to choosing sides, most went over to the group in power. In a country where office meant patronage, it was not surprising to see a landslide in favour of the Prime Minister.

The Syndicate's group elected Ram Subbag Singh, known for his home-spun simplicity, as its leader. Desai very much wanted that position but Asoka Mehta and a few other MPs threatened to quit if Desai was elected. Kamaraj and Nijalingappa brought about a compromise by making Ram Subbag Singh the group's leader in the Lok Sabha and Desai Chairman of the Parliamentary Party which includes members of both Houses.

Mrs Gandhi's actual strength turned out to be 297 MPs, 220 of them from the Lok Sahha. This did not give her an absolute majority in the Lower House of 523 members. But she was confident of the support of the forty-six Communist members who were egging her on from the sidelines to fight 'the vested interests'. According to them the process of polarization between Left and Right had begun and they had no hesitation in hacking her to the hilt.

The pro-Chinese faction, called the Communist Party of India (Marxists), felt uncomfortable—increasingly so as time went by because of her 'pro-Soviet' policies—but they had no choice; the image of the Syndicate was too Rightist for them not to side with Mrs Gandhi.

A regional party from Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, saw in the split an opportunity to mulct the Centre. Later events proved that the party's calculations in supporting

Mrs Gandhi were not wrong for she gave Rs. 17 crores (nearly £ 16.5 million) from Central funds to Tamil Nadu to meet its exaggerated claims of drought damage and later a steel plant.

Other political parties also saw their chance in the split and chose sides. The Jana Sangh, a Hindu chauvinistic party confined largely to North India, gave tacit support to the Congress party bosses. Not that it liked them. The split evoked a vague hope than an alternative Government was possible.

A similar expectation welled up in the heart of the Swatantra, a Rightist party which Mahatma Gandhi's contemporary, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, founded in 1963 to oppose the Congress party for having fallen from its ideals of service and selflessness.

But in both parties there were a few members who preferred the 'dynamism and courage' of Mrs Gandhi. They had to be curbed in the name of discipline; otherwise some would have sided with her.

The Praja Socialist Party was in a predicament; it did not want to miss the bus of socialism but was not sure if the time to ride it had arrived. It felt like going along with Mrs Gandhi but the Communists on her side made the party, known for its anti-Communist stance, think and pause. Ultimately, it decided to judge issues on merit and extend or deny its support accordingly.

Another organization with socialistic leanings, the Samyukta Socialist Party, found more in common with the Syndicate because the party's only aim was to create confusion in the country to capture power in its wake. Toppling Mrs Gandhi was only a means to that end. But some members did fall for the streak of socialism that Mrs Gandhi had exhibited; therefore the party tried to sail in two boats at the same time.

The overall picture was too jagged, too confused. But it was apparent that by and large the Leftist parties had lined up behind Mrs Gandhi and the Rightist behind the Syndicate. This gave an impression of polarization which was not quite correct.

This also encouraged some people to say that the Congress party which had won independence for India had through its split unleashed forces which might one day destroy individual freedom, if not freedom itself.

Ideology played only a minor role, although Mrs Gandhi was able to use it well. She could point out on the party bosses' side Desai who, as Mrs Gandhi told me in an interview on 14 July 1969, 'has a public image of a Rightist and has not erased it by his denials'.

Desai, however, countered it by telling me a day later: 'I am more socialist than she is'. He recalled how in reply to a remark by Kosygin during his visit to Delhi in January 1968, that the general impression about him [Desai] was that of an anti-public sector person, he had replied: 'This is propaganda by the Communists in India; otherwise give me one instance where I have opposed the public sector.'

Whatever be Desai's true beliefs, Mrs Gandhi was correct in saying that in the public mind he was associated with the Rightist forces.

Then there was Nijalingappa who appeared to have second thoughts on the Government's industrial policy formulated by Nehru to enable the public sector to play a dominant role. In fact, Nijalingappa said on 12 April 1969 at the Congress party's session at Faridabad near Delhi that 'production of goods in the private sector can be achieved more economically'.

So angry was Mrs Gandhi at that time that she hit back immediately by stating that 'profit is not the sole motive in public sector undertakings which are intended to lay the foundations of the economic base and to prevent concentration of wealth in private hands.'

Nijalingappa tried to correct the impression by reiterating the following day that he was a socialist but the label of 'Rightist' continued to stick to him.

The party bosses had also among them Patel who, as the Congress party's treasurer, always managed to collect huge sums from the moneyed people. He had the reputation of being pro-business and pro-private sector. True to his ideology, Patel described Nijalingappa's address as 'remarkably candid'. Mrs Gandhi's views as evidence of disunity in the Congress party.

Atulya Ghosh, a Tammany Hall leader in New York, was a chip of the same block. He was also responsible for collecting funds from industrialists who had found that the support of the party in power or its men was good for business.

certain of favours from the Congress Ministries which had ruled West Bengal until 1966.

A misfit in this group was Kamaraj who by no stretch of imagination could be considered a Rightist. Until the 1967 elections even the Communists had been extolling him as a Leftist. In 1966 they even sponsored his visit to the Soviet Union and some East European countries.

Far from the Right were also Asoka Mehta, a socialist by conviction, liberal Mrs Sucheta Kripalani, former Chief Minister of U.P., and glamorous Tarakeshwari Sinha, who had even demanded the abolition of all private property.

In the same way there was no dearth of Rightists on Mrs Gandhi's side. No doubt she stood left of Centre, but her supporters included people like Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, known for their conservative outlook and connections with leading capitalists.

But what about Chavan, who was first with her, then with the Syndicate and again with her? Did it mean that every time he joined her camp, he became progressive and when he went to the other side, he lost leftism on the way?

In fact, the nomenclature applied to different individuals or groups had little relevance. The real clash was that of personalities: between Mrs Gandhi and the party bosses, between two centres of power. And it had looked like coming for a long time, indeed from the day she became Prime Minister in January 1966, after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, successor to Jawaharlal Nehru.

Then Kamaraj and Desai were on opposite sides. The Syndicate which had united to keep Desai out of power because it found him rigid compared to amiable Shastri was then on Mrs Gandhi's side. So close was the relationship between Kamaraj and Mrs Gandhi at that time that she openly said she would contest the leadership of the Parliamentary Party only if Kamaraj, the then Congress President, asked her to stand.

On his part, Kamaraj supported her to the hilt. Even when his associates, Ghosh, Patil and Sanjiva Reddy from Andhra Pradesh, who later became Speaker of the Lok Sabha, tried to draft him for the Prime Ministership, he would not agree. And ultimately he put a stop to the move by saying that he knew nei-

ther English nor Hindi and that India's Prime Minister should be able to speak at least one of the two languages.

For Kamaraj to get Mrs Gandhi elected was also the realization of a promise he had made to himself. He told me that he was anxious even during Nehru's time that Mrs Gandhi should join her father's Cabinet; 'she too was keen to do so.' When Kamaraj once mentioned her name to Nehru the latter thought for a while and said: 'No, not yet. Indu, probably later.' Kamaraj decided that day to make Mrs Gandhi Prime Minister one day.

Though he did it, it was quite a task for him. With great difficulty Kamaraj was able to persuade his associates to support Mrs Gandhi who had managed to irritate most of them. She had always had something of the imperiousness of her father. Whereas in him it was forgivable and even taken to be an endearing weakness, in his daughter it could arouse nothing but IRE.

In 1965 when Sanjiva Reddy was the Congress party's President, he did not like the way Mrs Gandhi ordered him about. He was so angered once that he said that she seemed to think the Congress President was nothing but her *chopraasi* (penn). And when Kamaraj was able to break Reddy's opposition, most others fell in line.

Even at that time the clash was over personalities and not principles. Despite his reported Rightist views Desai was then supported by Left wingers like Krishna Menon. The Leftists' feeble explanation later was that they thought that by electing Desai they would be accelerating the process of polarization between the Left and the Right and this would help the country in the long run; even if the Right were to come into power the pendulum would ultimately swing to the Left.

Just as talk of the succession began even before Nehru's cortège left Teen Murti, his residence, so did the chorus of 'who would be next?' start before Shastri's body reached Delhi from Tashkent where he had died on 11 January 1966 of a heart attack.*

At the airport itself, the name of Mrs Gandhi started gaining currency as the next Prime Minister. A much-consulted astro-

*Details in Chapter 3.

loger was at Palam airport. Biju Patnaik, the former Chief Minister of Orissa, asked him: 'What do the stars foretell?' 'It will be a hat-trick', replied the astrologer, who also appeared to be a cricket fan, meaning that Nehru and Shastri were from Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh) and the new leader would also be from there. He was obviously referring to Mrs Gandhi.

The Congress party's Working Committee met, as it did after Nehru's death, to pass on the first day a resolution paying glowing tributes to Shastri, and to look on the second day for a successor. But this time, word had gone round that there would be more than two candidates.

Apart from Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai, the names of Gulzarilal Nanda, then Home Minister and officiating Prime Minister, and Jagjivan Ram were also mentioned.

It was suggested at the meeting that the winning candidate must secure more than half of the votes cast. If this was not possible on the first count, two or more ballots would be taken until one of the candidates had an absolute majority. Patil proposed that every member of the party be asked to write the name of the candidate of his choice on the ballot paper. This would bring to the fore all candidates and thus facilitate the process of elimination.

The Working Committee passed a resolution to express the hope that the election would be unanimous. A suggestion was made to repeat the consensus formula of 1964 by which succession to Nehru was decided. Morarji Desai's reaction was violent. He insisted on a contest. An informal committee was constituted with Kamaraj, Desai and Jagjivan Ram as members to effect unity. But the move was stillborn.

Desai distrusted Kamaraj; he still harboured the suspicion that Kamaraj had 'manoeuvred the consensus' which gave Shastri the Prime Ministership in 1964.

Where was the consensus when Kamaraj never took down the name or preference when ascertaining the wishes of MPs?

Desai had learnt the lesson of 'consensus'.

According to Desai, Kamaraj told a lie—Desai said so to his face—when after an informal meeting to get the consensus he said that the majority of members favoured Shastri. Desai believed—and still does—that Kamaraj 'had made up his mind

'beforehand' and that the 'meeting to find the consensus' was a sham. Desai's complaint was that Kamaraj, Reddy, Nijalingappa and Atulya Ghosh had met during the 1963 summer at the temple town of Tirupati in southern India to act as a Syndicate to keep him out. However, with the help of Kamaraj and the other members of the Syndicate, Mrs Gandhi was able to defeat Desai by 355 votes against 169.

Desai's defeat at the hands of Mrs Gandhi only increased his anger against Kamaraj. Ironically, he picked on the 'party bosses', who, he said, had put pressure on MPs to vote against him.

It was true that the party bosses were set against Desai but he could never have won against Shastri whom people had come to love for his modest and unassuming manner and who was often described as a key that fitted many locks.

And Desai also had no chance against Mrs Gandhi for many beside the party bosses were opposed to him because of his dogmatic views. Mrs Gandhi had a halo as Nehru's daughter and she was acceptable to all. People in thousands flocked to have a glimpse of Panditji's* daughter; she had an all-India image and the reputation of being secular and personally clean despite the allegation of Ram Manohar Lohia, the deceased SSP leader, that she had once accepted a mink coat as a gift.

* * *

It is often debated whether Nehru had his daughter in mind as his successor. Kamaraj says he suspected that. Patil is more categorical. He told me in an interview on 31 January 1970 that 'Nehru would have seen to it that she became Prime Minister after his death but he realized that she needed to be groomed and therefore selected Shastri for an interim period.'

Nijalingappa says that he is pretty sure that Nehru had his daughter in view. In his personal diary he wrote on 15 July 1969 that Nehru 'was always grooming her for the Prime Ministership obviously and patently'. As far back as 1959, when U.N. Dhebar, the then Congress President, was retiring, Nehru expressed his desire to make Mrs Gandhi the party's President.

*Since Nehru was a Pandit (Brahmin) he was endearingly called Panditji.

At that time Kamaraj, Reddy and some other friends had wanted Nijalingappa to head the party. 'But when we came to know of Nehru's desire we issued a statement to support the nomination of Mrs Gandhi,' Nijalingappa told me.

Shastri was convinced that Mrs Gandhi was uppermost in Nehru's mind as his successor. When Shastri was Home Minister I had occasion to talk to him on various matters. Once I ventured to ask him: 'Who do you think Nehru has in mind as his successor?'

'His daughter', Shastri said, without even a second's pause, as if he had already pondered over the problem. 'But it will not be easy', he added.*

Desai has no doubt that Nehru wanted his daughter to succeed him. In an interview he told me: 'Panditji held me in the highest esteem but his attitude changed after some time and I heard that he was wanting to have his daughter as his successor. He was grooming his daughter and I could see that. Dhebar proposed her name for the Congress party's presidentship in order to please him and he approved only her name—all the other names proposed he rejected. It was obvious what he wanted.'

But when Nehru died there were not many willing to have his daughter as Prime Minister. Desai wanted the post; so also Shastri, though he was loyal enough to be willing to withdraw in favour of Mrs Gandhi. 'I would favour Indiraji [Mrs Gandhi] if Morarjibhai** were to accept her. I want a unanimous choice; but if there is to be a contest, I would like to stand against Morarjibhai because I can defeat him, not Indiraji.'

Shastri did send word through Mishra to Desai to accept Mrs Gandhi as the unanimous choice. Desai's reaction was hostile. He said that he would prefer Shastri any day to Mrs Gandhi.

*Referring to this observation, which appeared in my book *Between the Lines*, Mrs Gandhi has said: 'Had this been in my father's mind, surely he would have wanted me to be elected to Parliament. However, whenever the suggestion was made he agreed that I should not go into Parliament.' I do not want to join issue with her; but Shastri did tell me that Nehru did have his daughter in mind as his successor. We were talking in Hindi and Shastri said: *Unke dil mein siraf unki larki hai*. (He has only his daughter in mind.)

***Bhai* means brother.

THE GREAT SPLIT

Shastri's effort was not because he was a Nehruite but because he wanted to avoid a conflict which he thought would tell upon the party's unity and ultimately India's. Otherwise he was quite unhappy over the treatment meted out to him.

After Nehru's sudden illness at Bhurbaneshwar in Orissa where an All-India Congress Committee session was held in January 1964, the Syndicate was able to persuade Nehru to take back Shastri as Minister without Portfolio to help the Prime Minister.

As soon as Nehru recovered from his illness, all important files and papers went direct to him and Shastri would come to know about them many days later, through the courtesy of some indulgent Deputy Secretary or Joint Secretary. 'I am only a glorified clerk,' he often said.

One day he received a request from an African country to nominate a delegate to an international labour conference. He suggested Abid Ali, known for his interest in labour problems. A senior official of the External Affairs Ministry, who later became its Secretary, did not accept the recommendation and went to the extent of having it changed by Nehru.

Shastri came to know about the rejection of his recommendation only through the routine papers which the lower echelons of bureaucracy, after scoring a point against a Minister, mark to him to spite him. Shastri felt humiliated.

As days went by, such instances piled up. In fact, he had to wait even to get an appointment with Nehru. He thought he would quit the Ministry. Once he told me that he would go back to Allahabad. 'There is nothing for me here now', he said. He then added woefully: 'If I continue to stay in Delhi I am bound to clash with Panditji. I would rather retire from politics than join issues with him.'

But two considerations made him stay. One, the Syndicate did not want him to give up the position of vantage he occupied as a Cabinet Minister, even though only No. 4 in rank. Two, by quitting, Shastri feared that the impression that Nehru had nominated him successor when he brought him back into the Government would weaken. He decided to wait.

Many important persons at that time said—and told him—that Nehru's behaviour was influenced by Indira Gandhi's 'hostility' towards him. At first he would never encourage such

talk but later he started checking to find out if that was true. And in due course he became convinced that he was not uppermost in Nehru's mind as his successor. There was somebody else.

Therefore, when Shastri constituted his Ministry, he did not give her a major portfolio because he considered her his rival. Later, when he shed his burden by giving up the Foreign Affairs portfolio because of the heart attack he had had soon after being sworn in as the Prime Minister, he did not select her.

His choice fell on non-controversial, pedantic Swaran Singh. He considered M. C. Chagla, but gave up the idea on the ground that Chagla, being a Muslim Minister, would bend backwards to prove his opposition to Pakistan, an Islamic country.

In a reminiscent mood Shastri had told me* that if he were to die in a year or two Mrs Gandhi would succeed him 'but if I live for four to five years, Chavan Sahib will be the Prime Minister'.

Though after Shastri's death Mrs Gandhi became Prime Minister only because of Kamaraj's staunch support and through him of the party bosses, after the 1967 General Election she won the office on her own. The Syndicate was in disrepute with stalwarts like Kamaraj, Patil and Atulya Ghosh losing at the polls.

The Congress party itself had been ousted from power in six States: West Bengal, Orissa, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. In U.P., Rajasthan and Haryana it was hanging on by a slender majority.

New Delhi was agog with rumours that Congressmen in some States intended crossing the floor. This did take place in U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana to give the Opposition short-lived Ministries. The Congress party's narrow majority of about forty members in the Lok Sabha made the leadership cautious, and the back-benchers somewhat impudent and defiant.

Even the topmost leaders agreed that some Congress party MPs might defect. A strong rumour swept the country that even Jagjivan Ram might cross the floor with his 'fifty supporters'. (There was no way to verify the number but that was the figure mentioned.) It was said authoritatively that the Opposition had offered him the Prime Ministership.

*Shastri told the same thing to his Private Secretary, C.P. Srivastva, now the Chairman of the Shipping Corporation, with whom I checked in 1970.

On the Opposition's behalf, the late Professor Humayun Kabir, a brilliant Muslim who left the Congress party in a bid to topple Mrs Gandhi, did send feelers to Jagjivan Ram but he did not respond favourably. Jagjivan Ram told me later that certain members of the Opposition tried to persuade him to cross the floor with his supporters.

"Why should I?" he asked me. "I foresee a better future for myself in the Congress itself." And he was correct because after the split in the party, he became the Congress party's President and Mrs Gandhi's confidant. His critics say that Jagjivan Ram did not leave the Congress party at that time because he realized that very few members would follow him.

The Syndicate's plight was unavoidable. They knew that they could not stop Mrs Gandhi from becoming Prime Minister again but they wanted to use their dominance in the organization to show that they still counted. Their grievance was that she had stopped seeking their advice in Government matters. But they were helpless.

They succeeded only to the extent of making Desai Deputy Prime Minister. He first hummed and hawed, complaining that he was being superseded; then he demanded the portfolio of Home (Internal Affairs) which Mrs Gandhi wanted to keep with the then trusted Chavan, but at the last minute said that he should accept Finance if he was to be titled Deputy Prime Minister. 'My friends wanted me to do so,' he rationalized later.

Even at that time, the young immature crowd around her criticized Desai's entry as a 'Trojan horse in the Cabinet'. And she at times believed it.

The credit for bringing Mrs Gandhi and Desai together must go to Gupta and Mishra, leaders of India's biggest States, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Jagjivan Ram, Ghosh and Mishra also approached Kamraj to request him to persuade Desai to accept the Finance Ministership.

Kamraj succeeded. He was happy that Desai was in the Cabinet to keep a check on Mrs Gandhi. Since the devaluation of the rupee on 6 June 1966,* Kamraj had lost faith in Mrs Gandhi's judgement. In fact, if there could be a watershed in

human relationship, devaluation was the one between Mrs Gandhi and Kamaraj.

Chavan, who had been with Mrs Gandhi through thick and thin, was disappointed that she had made Desai Deputy Prime Minister. She explained that the future Deputy Prime Minister would have no edge over other Cabinet Ministers except that he would have second ranking. But from that day the distance between her and Chavan began to increase.

No doubt Mrs Gandhi had her way on her own strength but the induction of Desai gave the impression that the party bosses also had their say. The 'consensus' appeared to have succeeded even though this time it was more in name than in practice. The struggle for power was over—but only for the time being.

Desai realized that he could not defeat Mrs Gandhi when Chavan was with her. And he started wooing him. Patil, from Chavan's home State, Maharashtra, helped in the process.

On the other hand, Kamaraj and Patil realized that they could not play any worthwhile role in the party until they returned to Parliament. Both contested by-elections and became Lok Sabha members. Mrs Gandhi was displeased at Patil's success —she even tried to get him defeated first by sponsoring an independent candidate and then supporting a Swatantra member.

With the return of Kamaraj and Patil to Parliament, the fires of opposition to Mrs Gandhi were stoked. Shrewd as Mrs Gandhi was, she could see the forces gathering against her. She started talking more and more in terms of ideology, giving the impression of being a Leftist, hedged and hampered from radical action by the party leaders whom she described as Rightists.

At the same time, she encouraged a few ex-Communists like Chanderjit Yadav to attack the 'Rightist leadership' in the Congress party, meaning Desai. Chavan, wanting to wound but not kill, also asked his supporters like Mohan Dharia and Chandra Shekhar, formerly with the Praja Socialist Party, to join the critics of 'vested interests'.

Those were the days (August 1968) when Mrs Gandhi heard about a conspiracy to remove her. Kamaraj, Patil, Ram Subhag Singh and Rajasthan's Chief Minister Sukhadia were mentioned

as the persons who were to tell Mrs Gandhi to her face that she must resign. Desai later told me that there was such a plan and very proudly said: 'They will ultimately approach me because I am the only one on whom they can agree.'

The conspiracy is said to have failed because Kamaraj had second thoughts and did not reach Delhi on the fixed day. And Patil had to go to America to attend to an ailing niece.

However, Mrs Gandhi got the warning. Of all her rivals Desai was the most vulnerable because his son, Kanti Desai, was alleged to be using his father's name to make officials show favour to some business concerns. Certain Government files were made available at Hotel Ashoka, a Government undertaking, to Chandra Shekhar who said that Desai continued to hold shares in a company controlled by his son. Desai explained that he had invested his savings in the company because it offered good dividends—and there could be nothing criminal in that.

Mrs Gaodhi did not desecrate Desai. Nor did she censure Chandra Shekhar even though the Congress Parliamentary Party authorized her to do so. This further annoyed Desai.

In fact, taking a leaf from Chandra Shekhar's book, some others—who came to be known as the Youog Turks*—blamed Desai, Patil and Nijalingappa for the Government's 'pro-capital' economic policies which had brought progress to a halt.

All the three top Syndicate members were sore with Mrs Gandhi: Desai because he suspected her hand in the campaign of vilification against him; Kamaraj because he had been consigned to inactivity and ignominy despite 'all' that he did for her; and Nijalingappa because it was she who persuaded him to be the Congress party President but was now seeking his undoing.

On 24 August 1968, Nijalingappa wrote in his diary

Morarjibhai is extremely unhappy about the Prime Minister's approach to many problems, specially the methods and men she employs to bring down the prestige of leaders. Discussions

*In Turkey where the name was coined it was meant to be used for firebrands opposed to the regime; in India it is used to describe those very much with the régime who live well but talk of socialism.

are going on everywhere. I am afraid if a vote is taken what would happen to her. But I am also afraid that such a step would break the party and the whole country would be in chaos. I am convinced that this lady should remove herself from the baneful influence of fellows like Dinesh. I have to carefully watch the situation.

Nijalingappa disliked Dinesh Singh for many reasons; one was because Dinesh Singh was collecting funds in the name of the Congress party for election purposes and not giving any accounts to him. Nijalingappa blamed Mrs Gandhi and wrote in his diary on 12 January 1969: 'I telephoned the P.M. for money. She denies having received anything. I am not inclined to believe her.'

She must be disciplined or thrown out. This was what the party bosses thought. But how? It would look odd to have a vote of no-confidence against the Prime Minister without an issue to base it on. This was considered in September 1968, but abandoned. It was decided to wait for 'a suitable time'.

On 12 March 1969, Nijalingappa wrote in his diary: 'I am not sure if she [Mrs Gandhi] deserves to continue as P.M. Possibly soon there may be a showdown.' About one and a half months later, on 25 April, he wrote that Desai 'discussed the necessity of the P.M. being removed'.

The party bosses were now looking for an opportunity. That came about eight months later when Dr. Zakir Husain, India's third President, died of a heart attack on 3 May 1969.

* * *

The President of India is somewhat like a monarch in the United Kingdom, a ceremonial and constitutional head who enjoys executive power only at the time of 'a grave emergency when the country is threatened by war and external aggression or internal disturbances'. The elected members of the State legislatures and the two Houses of Parliament elect the President.

Filling such a post should have been a routine matter. But Mrs Gandhi and her rivals quarrelled over who should be the Congress party's nominee. Both thought that this was the

right time to try their strength, to establish their supremacy.

Mrs Gandhi had also been increasingly aware that the organization's leaders were in league to force on her a candidate she did not want. This was not far wrong because a few days after Zakir Husain's death, Desai, Kamaraj and Nijalingappa had come to an understanding that she should not be allowed to have her candidate as President.

Nijalingappa wrote in his diary two days after Zakir Husain's death: 'Several names are floating about including mine, Sanjiva Reddy [then the Lok Sabha Speaker], Kamaraj, etc.' On 15 May, Nijalingappa wrote: 'The P.M. is rumoured to be in favour of Giri and Jagjivan Ram, lately Sardar Swaran Singh at the suggestion of Russia's Kosygin.'

Mrs Gandhi had apparently thought of having Jagjivan Ram as the party's candidate because she mentioned his name to Gupta, then U.P. Chief Minister, within 24 hours of Zakir Husain's death. He passed this information on to the Syndicate, but his hunch was that she would ultimately try to give the post to Sanjivayya, a loyal follower.

To Desai, then her Deputy Prime Minister, she said that since India had had three eminent persons as its Presidents—Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr Radhakrishnan and Dr Zakir Husain—the next one should be equally good. She casually mentioned the name of Varahagiri Venkata Giri, the Vice-President, who was at that time Acting President.*

Desai's reaction was not favourable. He said that Giri's performance in the Rajya Sabha (Parliament's Upper House over which Giri presided in his capacity as Vice-President) had not been up to the mark. Moreover he was 'too expensive'. (Giri has four sons, seven daughters and thirty-nine grandchildren.)

Desai recalled that Mrs Gandhi herself had opposed Giri's

*Giri made quite an issue of the word 'acting'. He pointed out that there was no such office as 'Acting President' in the Constitution. The matter went up to the Home Ministry which after consulting the Law Ministry agreed to drop the prefix 'acting'. Newspapers, news agencies and All India Radio were requested to drop the word 'acting'. Government-owned AIR readily obliged but others did not despite personal requests from Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House).

appointment even as Vice-President and it was he who persuaded her to select him.

Mrs Gandhi did not mention any other name but told Desai that since 1969 was Mahatma Gandhi's birth centenary year, it would be a befitting tribute to his memory if 'we were to elect a Harijan for the post'. (It was Mahatma Gandhi who gave untouchables the name of Harijans—children of Hari, the God.)

Desai opposed the suggestion. He told her: 'If you want a Harijan, we have only two persons to consider: Jagjivan Ram and Sanjivayya (a Central Minister belonging to Andhra Pradesh). In the case of Jagjivan Ram you must consider how it would look to have as the President a person who has not paid his income-tax for ten years,* and against whom your father, Jawaharlal Nehru, had instituted an inquiry and had found him wanting in many respects. And Sanjivayya is very young and relatively small in stature'.

The two discussed the matter three or four times but never agreed upon any name. Desai did mention the name of Sanjiva Reddy, but only once and he never insisted on his nomination.

Nijalingappa met Mrs Gandhi on his own to find out if she had any particular individual she would like to have as President. She said she had nobody in mind. Nijalingappa then mentioned two names: Giri and Jagjivan Ram. . She kept quiet and appeared to be in no hurry.

Kamaraj suggested the name of Sanjiva Reddy who, after getting a hint that Mrs Gandhi wanted him, went to her to discuss his candidature. She said she had no objection. Reddy had felt similar equivocation on her part when he was elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha; Mrs Gandhi was till the last minute torn between him and pro-Communist Khadilkar, now a Minister of State, for Speakership. This time Reddy wrote a letter to Mrs Gandhi recording the conversation he had had with her and said that he presumed that he had her blessing in his bid for nomination as the Congress candidate for Presidency.

When Nijalingappa met her a second time, she said that some people had mentioned the name of Morarji Desai. This was

*Asked at a Press Conference to explain Jagjivan Ram's lapse, Mrs Gandhi said, 'it was a case of forgetfulness'.

her way of letting others know what she really wanted. Mrs Gandhi had never been reconciled to Desai's inclusion in her Cabinet.

She found him intractable: once, during discussions on the constitution of an autonomous hill State within Assam, when she suggested that 'law and order' should be within the hill State's jurisdiction, he threatened to resign on that issue; another time when she wanted Subramaniam to be Deputy Chairman of the Central Planning Commission, Desai had opposed the proposal because Subramaniam had lost in the 1967 polls.

Mrs Gandhi had also heard from various sources that Desai was working to get the Prime Ministership. This was, however, not true. No doubt he wanted to be Prime Minister and told all and sundry that she was taking the country downhill, but he was incapable of raising the standard of revolt. He preferred to have others do that. He knew an open challenge to Mrs Gandhi was risky and he was afraid of being thrown into the wilderness, having had a taste of it for four years after Nehru had dropped him from the Cabinet in 1963.

Desai was sounded to find out if he would agree to be the Congress party's candidate for Presidentship. When I broached the subject to him his reply was that he had already been approached and had said 'No'. 'She [Mrs Gandhi] should be the President', he said. Not that he thought she would make a better candidate—'there is no one in the country better than me to occupy this position', he said. But when he was helpless as No. 2 in Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet, as President he would be even more so.

'I know that in the name of quelling internal disturbances I as President could assume executive powers, but to do so I would have to depend upon the armed forces. For some time the Defence Chiefs might allow me to be President but one day one of them might himself like to occupy that position. Where will we go from there?' Desai asked.

To Nijalingappa, he said he was not averse to becoming the President, but if he was not in the Cabinet 'the woman would sell the country to the Communists'.

Once Mrs Gandhi came to know that Desai was not willing she decided to have Jagjivan Ram. But she kept her own coun-

sel. Sometimes she would mention the name of Jayaprakash Narayan, a Gandhiite revolutionary who has retired from active politics, and sometimes Giri. She would never disclose her mind. This led Chavan, as he told me, to believe that she had no candidate of her own and he promised to support Sanjiva Reddy.

Mrs Gandhi's endeavour was to bypass the Congress party and decide herself who should be the Presidential candidate, meaning thereby Jagjivan Ram. She asked Nijalingappa to leave the matter to her. But he objected, pointing out that her father, Nehru, had always left it to the Congress party's eight-member Parliamentary Board (the High Command). As the party bosses controlled this body, she insisted on referring the matter to the twenty-one-member Congress Working Committee, a bigger forum where she had several supporters. Even though Nijalingappa said that this was not the practice, he convened a meeting of the Working Committee. The party bosses had done some arithmetic and found that they had a majority.

Mrs Gandhi also made some calculations and got the same answer. So she did not raise the matter at the Working Committee meeting and went along with the decision to call the Parliamentary Board meeting to select a candidate.

The Parliamentary Board members were: Mrs Gandhi, Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Nijalingappa, Kamaraj, S. K. Patil and Morarji Desai. Mrs Gandhi could bank on Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Jagjivan Ram and presumed that Chavan would go along with her. Thus the likely line-up would be 4 : 4 and no decision could be taken if there was a tie.

But her assumption that Chavan was on her side was not correct because both had been drifting apart. Chavan had been upset by the induction of Desai in the Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister which meant a demotion for him to third place. The real damage had, however, been done by Dinesh Singh. He was then close to Mrs Gandhi and was wont to make this plain to the rest of his colleagues. He would often mention in public the contents of confidential Government files which Chavan as Home Minister had sent to the Prime Minister.

In fact until 1967 every important paper received by Mrs Gandhi or sent by her was routed through Dinesh Singh.

There was also an official communique to say that he would assist her. This practice continued off and on up to the beginning of 1968. Then P. N. Haksar joined the Prime Minister as her Secretary after having served in London as India's Deputy High Commissioner, and files began to be routed through him. Dinesh Singh was left out.

This also marked the beginning of the estrangement between Dinesh Singh and Mrs Gandhi on the one hand and between him and her Secretary on the other. It culminated two years later in Dinesh Singh first threatening to quit the Cabinet and then Mrs Gandhi moving him from the External Affairs Ministry despite his protest.

During the days of the Presidential election, by keeping Dinesh Singh at a distance—she never allowed him to return to India despite his cabled request to cut short his stay in New York where he was leading the Indian team to the U.N. General Assembly meeting—Mrs Gandhi felt that Chavan and others aggrieved like him would understand that she had no real preference for Dinesh Singh. But she was mistaken.

The other side had gone to the extent of promising Chavan the Deputy Prime Ministership with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister until the 1972 election, and after that Chavan was to become the Prime Minister. Later, when the cleavage between Mrs Gandhi and the party bosses became sharper, Nijalingappa and Kamaraj offered Chavan the Prime Ministership, after 'winning' in the Presidential poll.

Desai had been wanting to be Prime Minister since the death of Nehru. But Kamaraj had no other choice, even his offer to Chavan was a gamble. And as events proved, Chavan did not fall for it.

In his diary Nijalingappa wrote on 21 July 'Chavan is not playing cricket.' Desai wanted to hear from Chavan's lips that he wanted the Prime Ministership. 'After making promises to me and saying that he would not even insist on a Ministership how can he face me?' asked Morarji Desai.

Confirmation that Chavan was on the Syndicate's side reached Mrs Gandhi from many sources but she was confident that when the chips were down he would be with her. She held her cards close to her chest. And one card, the ace, was 'socialism'.

She was positive that Chavan with his 'Leftist image' would have no choice but to back her when she played that.

And play it she did on 3 July 1969, on the eve of the All-India Congress Committee session in Bangalore, a prosperous industrial town in South India. There she unfolded her economic programme—through her emissary, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. She delayed her departure from Delhi by a day on the plea that she was indisposed. Her real purpose was to watch the reaction to her proposals which she said later were her 'stray thoughts' jotted down hurriedly.

The note suggested nationalization of the 'top five or six Indian banks'; raising of bank investment and Government securities by about 5 per cent, yielding about Rs. 200 crores (nearly \$ 125 million) for the benefit of the public sector; banning of foreign capital to enter fields in which local technical know-how is available; nationalization of import of raw materials; curbing of restrictive trade practices resulting in unhealthy trends in industry; more autonomy for public sector undertakings, reforms, slum clearance and drinking water supply to rural areas, and so on.

Subsequently, these 'stray thoughts' came in handy, for her to use as a stick to beat the 'conservative' party bosses with. They saw through the game. They knew that she was trying to paint them as obscurants. And they did not want to be caught on the wet wicket of an economic programme.

When Ahmed placed the note before the Congress party's Working Committee, Kamaraj asked what the economic note had got to do with the organization. 'Who stops her from implementing it? She heads the Government,' he said.

The Syndicate adopted the strategy of lying low and accepting whatever she asked them to do until the Presidential election was over. But some thought that the acceptance of her note would propitiate her—a quid pro quo—she would accept Reddy later. The economic resolution as spelt out in Mrs Gandhi's note was adopted without dissent. But they felt more than ever that she must be replaced.

When it came to the Congress party's nominee for the Presidential election the Syndicate acted in the manner it had planned earlier. Mrs Gandhi, who reached Bangalore a day later,

vainly tried her best to increase her support in the Congress party's Parliamentary Board. She sounded all its members individually about Jagjivan Ram.

At the Board's meeting she said that she would have preferred Giri to be promoted because he was already officiating as President; but since his age (he was then seventy-five) was against him, she would like a Harijan to be nominated during Mahatma Gandhi's birth centenary year. She proposed the name of Jagjivan Ram.

Patil threw Reddy's hat into the ring. Nijalingappa said that since there were two names he was forced to ask for a vote. Ahmed began reciting the points in favour of Jagjivan Ram but Morarji Desai stopped him from doing so on the plea that it was not fair to discuss the merits of a candidate when he was present at the meeting.

Mrs Gandhi's face fell when Chavan also raised his hand in favour of Reddy. The voting was two in favour of Jagjivan Ram (Mrs Gandhi and Ahmed) and four in favour of Reddy (Desai, Kamaraj, Patil and Chavan). There was no need for Nijalingappa to vote; he remained neutral and so did Jagjivan Ram.

Mrs Gandhi showed her annoyance by saying: 'You will have to face the consequences'. (She repeated the words three hours later at a Press Conference.) Ahmed intervened to ask how they could force on the Prime Minister a candidate she did not want.

Desai argued that Nehru was twice out-voted on the party's nominee for the Presidential candidate, once when he did not want to give another term to Dr Rajendra Prasad, India's first President, and the second time when he wanted to elevate Dr Radhakrishnan from Vice-President to President.

Mrs Tarzankaravi Sinha, Desai's staunch supporter, issued a statement that if Mrs Gandhi was not satisfied with the decision she should appeal against it. Mrs Sinha's draft statement read: 'If the Prime Minister feels distressed over the party's decision, she has an honourable effective option available to her—she can refuse to lead the party in Parliament.' At the last minute the statement was changed to read: 'She has an honourable ~~effective~~ option available to her—to appeal for reconsideration of the Board itself.'

In an effort to cool tempers Patil suggested that the official declaration of the candidate be withheld and that Nijalingappa and Mrs Gandhi should meet to 'iron out differences'. What was there to iron out? Mrs Gandhi thought. She was now convinced that the Syndicate's insistence on having Reddy was part of the plot to oust her. She must hit back.

Nijalingappa telephoned her to fix up an appointment, but she excused herself on one plea or another. Subsequently when she met him, she expressed no desire to pursue the matter with him.

By this time Giri had announced his candidature for the Presidential contest. There are several allegations that he did so at the instance of Mrs Gandhi. Nijalingappa told me that she asked Giri on the secret phone to contest while Patil said that it was Gujral, State Minister for Information and once a member of her inner circle, who conveyed the message to Giri. There is no concrete evidence of this. Both Giri and Gujral denied the allegation when I talked to them. In fact, Giri said that Nijalingappa had promised to get the Congress party's nomination for him.

The only evidence if any is that the Minister of State, L. N. Mishra, close to Mrs Gandhi, flew from Bangalore to New Delhi the same day and went to Giri straight from the airport to thank him for announcing his candidature.

* * *

D. P. Mishra was the master strategist on Mrs Gandhi's side; Swaran Singh, Fakhruddin Ahmed and Gujral flocked to his hotel room in Bangalore for advice after Reddy's selection. They were all worried, but Mishra was unruffled. He said that since the other side had taken the initiative, there was nothing to do but fight.

Before they could decide upon any line of action, Mrs Gandhi sent for Mishra. It was in Mysore's Raj Bhavan, the residence of the State Governor, where Mrs Gandhi was staying, that the strategy was chalked out. It was decided that Mrs Gandhi should strip Desai of his Finance portfolio to force him to quit the Cabinet.

Her real anger was against Chavan who had voted with the

Syndicate. But since the plan was to convert the faction fight into an ideological clash, it was considered advisable not to touch Chavan who had a liberal image. It was easy to pick on Desai, who, as Mrs Gandhi explained to him in a letter, had come to be 'identified with certain basic approaches and attitudes'.

What she meant was that he stood for Rightist policies. Later, she explained to editors that she had asked Desai to give up the Finance portfolio because he did not believe in Leftist policies and with him at the helm of the Finance Ministry she could not implement her 'progressive' programme.

While deciding upon the dismissal of Desai it was feared that Chavan, who was at that time with the Syndicate, might submit his resignation in protest. However, Mishra was confident that he would not do so, but if ever he expressed his desire to quit, he should be allowed to go.

Mishra proved right. Chavan did not resign. In fact, he told his associates that if Mrs Gandhi objected only to Desai holding Finance, he was willing to swap portfolios with him. Later she herself took the Home portfolio from Chavan, giving him Finance, much to his unhappiness.

Finding Chavan reluctant to quit following Desai's exit, some other Ministers on the Syndicate side also stayed back; persons like Ram Subhag Singh said they had resignation letters in their pockets, but did not tender them. They did not want to leave office. At that time Reddy's personal request to them not to do anything which would endanger his election gave them a convincing alibi.

However, they reiterated that they would move against Mrs Gandhi after having installed Reddy at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Chavan was sounded again and he repeated his earlier promise to come out openly against her after the Presidential contest.

In fact, the Syndicate was expecting worse. Nijalingappa wrote in his diary on 15 July 1969:

In view of the temper of the P.M. she may do any odd thing. She is keenly feeling that she being the 'Prime Minister of India' her opinion regarding the President's selection ought to have been accepted. She seems to be taking too much for granted and is overbearing and haughty. She has been taught a lesson

now. Being wilful and brought up by a father who was always grooming her for the Prime Ministership obviously and patently, I feel she will do something nasty in a huff. She is so very much angry and upset about Chavan and then Morarji; she expected that being her Cabinet colleagues they should go with her in whatever she does. Wrong approach. Let us see what she may do. It is a pity that accepting Kamaraj's strong desire we made her P.M.

Mrs Gandhi knew she had put the party bosses in disarray; she did not want to give them time to reshape their strategy. The ideological twist she had given to the clash of personalities had stood her in good stead. She decided to pursue the same line.

Desai had no choice except to resign when his portfolio was taken from him. Within hours of accepting his resignation she announced (on 20 July 1969) nationalization of fourteen major Indian banks, which were already under 'social control', that is, under the close scrutiny of the Government's Reserve Bank of India. The timing was perfect for image-making purposes.

Now she could daub her programme a deeper red to make her look more 'progressive'. She could exploit the 'Rightist image' of Desai more effectively. She could show more demonstratively that the quarrel between her and the Syndicate was between Left and Right. She could denounce the bosses for not letting India develop or implement what the Congress party had promised since independence and before.

The Syndicate was caught on the wrong foot. They were angry over the unceremonial way in which Desai was ousted (Desai told Nijalingappa that he must be reinstated and given back his portfolio), but the party bosses felt helpless. Any protest would give them a bad name. After all nationalization of banks had been an integral part of the Congress party's manifesto for the past two decades. How could they now suggest, even by implication, that they were not in favour of the measure? The Syndicate decided to wait until after Reddy's election, which they took for granted.

The Communists took the maximum advantage of the bank nationalization measure to propagate that it was their policy

which was accepted. In fact, it was they who organized meetings, rallies and demonstrations in support of Mrs Gandhi's programme.

The Congress party did very little. Most of its members regarded the nationalization of banks and its aftermath as a projection of the conflict at the top and kept quiet. The effect was that Mrs Gandhi began to rely on the Communists and believed more than ever before that they were the ones who had faith in her 'Leftist programme'.

In the wake of the enthusiasm and euphoria which the bank nationalization announcement generated Desai was forgotten. He explained, with some justification, that Mrs Gandhi had herself preferred social control to nationalization and he had done what she wanted when he was in office. Why had he been treated so shabbily? he asked. Asoka Mehta recalled how she herself had rejected the proposal for nationalization of banks when it was discussed in the Cabinet in 1966. (Her plea was that her Finance Minister, then Sachin Chaudhary, was against the step.)

But nothing succeeds like success. The teeming millions of India, poor and gullible, believed more in her—the daughter of their leader, Nehru—than in her opponents who were just a picture of the upper middle-class. She somehow gave the impression of being with the underdog.

In a country where money is hard to get nationalization of banks was regarded by the average man as relaxation of restrictions. Every person, from a business executive to a cab man, saw in it an opportunity to draw money from banks, invest it in his business and develop it. This was the dawn they had been awaiting; what the Cassandras said did not matter. Her defeat at the hands of the party bosses in Bangalore was forgotten. Overnight she became more than life-size, the champion of the people. The Government-controlled All India Radio helped her

Dinesh Singh told me later that nationalization of banks was planned much before the Bangalore Congress session; it was a counter-measure to gain 'popularity' if the Syndicate were to insist on its own candidate for the Presidential election.

Significantly, one day before the banks were nationalized, *Pravda*, the Soviet Communist Party's paper, said that Desai's

exit followed differences over nationalization of banks. The Chairman of the Communist Party of India, S. A. Dange, welcoming the measure, said: 'We have allies in the Congress led by Mrs Gandhi.'

Besides the Communists, the pro-Left SSP and PSP supported Mrs Gandhi's announcement although they did not extend her unstinted support. The two Rightist parties, the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra, concentrated more on challenging the validity of the measure than on criticizing it. (They filed a petition in the Supreme Court, which later adjudged the Act to be unconstitutional.)]

Chavan, who had promised to side with the Syndicate, began to waver. He did not want to be cast in a conservative mould. As a follower of Lenin's contemporary, M. N. Roy, the founder of Radical Humanism in India, he was liberal in his leanings and wanted to sustain that image. His home State, Maharashtra, had a smattering of liberal Congressmen; they also pressed him to stand with the 'progressive forces'.

Chavan realized that ideology had very little to do with the dispute in the party, but now that Mrs Gandhi had made most people think that it had everything to do with it he vacillated in his allegiance to the pledge he had given earlier to support Reddy. The Syndicate assured him that they would join issue with Mrs Gandhi after the Presidential election. He decided to wait.

The Congress party's Working Committee refrained from commenting on either Desai's resignation or the nationalization of banks. The Syndicate had decided to pass a resolution to ask Mrs Gandhi to take back Desai, who was pressing for his reinstatement.

But a few hours before the meeting Chavan advised Nijalingappa that in view of the talks he had had with Mrs Gandhi, no resolution should be passed. He gave the impression that some understanding might be reached. Mrs Gandhi also spoke to Nijalingappa and Kamaraj. Ultimately, it was decided not to pass any resolution. Only the Prime Minister and the Congress President were to meet to 'see what could be done'.

There was, however, a commotion in the Congress Parliamentary Party, but it was a storm in a tea cup. Nijalingappa desired the leaders to discuss among themselves the entire gamut

of party affairs, particularly Mrs Gandhi's fear that there was a plot to throw her out. She was not interested in such a meeting and hence it did not materialize.

She appeared to have reached a stage where nothing bothered her. She made no gesture to indicate that she would like to settle differences. In fact, she said that those who had criticized her in the past for not doing anything were now attacking her for doing something and cited the nationalization of banks as proof of her contention. This was only the beginning, she said. The country must become socialistic.

Mellowed by the needs of the situation, the Syndicate called a truce till 16 August, the day of the Presidential election. The party bosses feared that any questioning of Mrs Gandhi at that time would lead to a split in the party and that might prejudice Reddy's chances of election.

In fact, they pressed her to file Reddy's nomination papers and promised to have her candidate—Gopal Swarup Pathak from Allahabad, her home town—as Vice President. Mrs Gandhi had no choice. She did not want to provoke a fight over indiscipline and get involved in a battle of attrition.

She filed the nomination papers—the only mistake she committed during the entire crisis, says Mishra, and that too because he was out of town at that time. It was clear that Mrs Gandhi was still not sure of her ground. She was angry, she felt humiliated over what had happened in Bangalore and she was definite that the party bosses were out to remove her. Yet she had no plan except to project her own image as a leader thwarted from doing good to the country and to appeal directly to the people over the heads of the Congress party and its bosses.

Mrs Gandhi had expected that after all that she had done and said since the Congress party's Bangalore session the Syndicate would get the message and give up Reddy. When this did not happen, Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed started a whispering campaign against their own party's candidate. At that time, Mishra intervened and argued that it would be easy in Delhi to win over some MPs to their side secretly but in the States Reddy would win because the Chief Ministers were bound to support the official candidate. They should either come out into the open or accept Reddy.

As the day of polling approached, Mrs Gandhi's camp was thick with rumours. It was alleged that after his election, Reddy would dismiss the Prime Minister and take over the administration in the name of an emergency. The Syndicate followers made no bones about the fact that once Reddy was elected as the President, a few MPs from their side would submit to them a memorandum that Mrs Gandhi had lost the Congress party's confidence so that he could use this as a pretext to ask the Congress Parliamentary Party to elect another leader.

But under the Constitution the President has no such powers. Whether he could act contrary to the advice of the Government in power had been tested eighteen years earlier.

At that time Rajendra Prasad was the President and Nehru the Prime Minister. The Hindu Code Bill had annoyed Prasad and he wrote to Nehru to express his desire to act on his own judgment—*independent* of the Council of Ministers—when giving assent to Bills or sending messages to Parliament. He argued that the Indian President was not like a British monarch because no limitations had been mentioned in the Constitution. Had the intention been different, Prasad said, there would have been an Article to govern the office of President—like Article 105 in which the British precedent was cited for the basis of the powers, privileges and amenities of Members of Parliament.

Nehru asked a legal expert from Madras, Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyyar, and M. C. Setalvad, the then Attorney-General, for their views. Aiyyar wrote that the President's position was analogous to that of 'a British monarch in England' and that it would be 'constitutionally improper for the President not to seek or not to be guided by the advice of his Ministers'.

Setalvad wrote that by Article 74(1) the President was required to act in all matters with the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers. He also said that sovereignty lay with 'the people'—Parliament was elected by 'the people' and the Council of Ministers were from Parliament. Hence power was with them and not with the President.

However, to set Mrs Gandhi's mind at rest, Reddy issued a statement that 'the President of India is the constitutional head, who has no policy and programme of his own', and promised to discharge his duties 'as the constitutional head of the country'.

Mrs Gandhi did not take his assurance seriously. Her information through Intelligence officers was that the Syndicate would strike after the election. The secret was almost given out by Mrs Tarkeshwari Sinha, in a signed article in which she said that the two sides were lying low and that a showdown would take place after 16 August, the day of the Presidential election.

It was apparent that opposition to the party's candidate would look treacherous and morally wrong. Talk of ideological differences was considered the best facade. Chavan and Kamaraj, who were on the Syndicate side, were dubbed 'anti-people', even though, by any standard, they were greater socialists than Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Mrs Gandhi's close associates.

Mrs Gandhi continued to play the role of a martyr. In sponsored public meetings and rallies she continued to emphasize that she was being pilloried because she was trying to implement the socialistic policies of the party. And she made it quite clear that she opposed all that the Syndicate stood for.

Without mentioning the name of Reddy, Mrs Gandhi indicated her opposition to him; her men openly canvassed against Reddy. Mrs Gandhi's supporters—nearly 250 MPs—met at the residence of V. C. Shukla, then Minister of State for Home, to discuss plans to defeat Reddy. The Congress party appeared edging to the precipice.

For the first time the party bosses feared the possibility of cross-voting. They thought of requesting Mrs Gandhi to issue a whip to Congress party members to vote for Reddy—a move meant to pin her down.

On 10 August 1969, Nijalingappa described the situation thus in his diary:

I have written to the P.M. that in view of the developments in the party and outside it is necessary that she should issue a statement. I am not sure what she will do. She is riding a very high horse and her pride and presumptuousness do not seem to have any limits. Pride goeth before a fall. During the last one week there have been demonstrations of taxi drivers, rickshaw-walas, students, etc., etc. before her house and she has been addressing them as if she is the only one who

works for the poor, and complaining against a few individuals. Even the name of the Congress is not mentioned.

A new, insidious kind of campaign to judge people's commitment started those days. What did it mean, who decided it and how was it measured? These questions were seldom answered. Everywhere, more so in Mrs Gandhi's camp, the question asked, often in an aggressive tone, was: 'What is your commitment?' The accusing finger was not pointed at politicians alone. Journalists and civil servants were equally in the dock.

What was vaguely meant was that those who were with Mrs Gandhi were 'progressive, pure and purposeful' and those who were on the other side were 'Rightists, reactionary and retrograde'.

Despite repeated requests by the party bosses, Mrs Gandhi did not say even a word in favour of Reddy. It appeared that she was still looking for some pretext, some plausible reason, to denounce Reddy as well as the party bosses.

And then Nijalingappa walked into the trap. As was decided by the Congress party's Working Committee at a meeting attended by Mrs Gandhi, he met the Jana Sangh and Swatantra leaders to seek their support for Reddy. This gave Mrs Gandhi the handle she was looking for. Ideological heresy might be difficult to explain, but not a betrayal of secularism.

Jagjivan Ram, a Harijan, and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, a Muslim, were selected to fire the first salvo. It was done late at night so that the morning papers would carry their open letter without a rebuttal from the other side.

The two blamed Nijalingappa for having talks with parties (pro-Hindu Jana Sangh and Rightist Swatantra) that were 'wholly opposed to the accepted ideology and policies of the Congress'. The sentence in their joint letter that the talks 'may have grave repercussions on the Presidential election' foretold what was coming.

Nijalingappa naturally protested to Mrs Gandhi against such accusations, little knowing that she had seen the letter before it was sent. He explained to her in a communication that he met members of many political parties and 'all I wanted from them was that they should vote for our candidate'. And as if Nija-

Nijalingappa was aware of Mrs Gandhi's fears, he wrote that rumours about toppling of the present Congress Government were baseless.

He also wrote to Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed asking them to retract their allegations. Hardly had Nijalingappa's reply reached them when they wrote another letter repeating the same charges in a more strident tone.

At the same time, a whispering campaign was launched to accuse the party bosses of hatching a conspiracy to form coalition with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra parties to topple Mrs Gandhi's Government. Muscular Atal Behari Vajpayee, the stormy petrel of the Jana Sangh, and studious-looking N. G. Ranga of the Swatantra, the two whom Nijalingappa had met, denied any coalition talk.

The Syndicate's decision, after the split in the Congress party, to have an alliance with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra gives the impression that there might have been something more than an appeal to vote for Reddy from Nijalingappa at the meeting.

Nijalingappa protested against the 'false accusations' but found the same charges repeated in subsequent letters by Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed. And then began what might be described as nocturnal diplomacy. The letters sent by one side and the replies by the other were invariably at night: the whole day there was nothing to go on except rumours, gossip and guesses.

What motivated this strategy was not difficult to guess. Each side wanted to have the last word—at least for the day. And since the Press was the only reliable medium to propagate the two points of view, the attempt was to release the letters as late as possible so that the opposite side did not have enough time to make the morning edition with its version.

As planned earlier, Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed became more and more vituperative in their charges and explicit in their strategy. They said that since Nijalingappa had 'betrayed' the party principles how Members of Parliament and of the State legislatures should vote in the Presidential election was a 'matter of conscience'.

Mrs Gandhi then came out into the open. She refused to issue a whip to the party members to vote for Reddy and re-

peated the charge of her associates that 'electoral arrangements' with the Jana Sangh and Swatantra had been sought. She went further and said that the basis on which Reddy's nomination was made no longer operated. Congress party members should have the right to vote against the party's candidate if they so desired—'conscience voting', she called it.

Nijalingappa denied the charge that 'attempts had been made at the highest level' to compromise with political parties totally opposed to the principles and policies of the Congress party. He replied in the same vein to Mrs Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed.

But the Syndicate was rattled. It was losing the propaganda war and knew it. It wanted to avoid a split—Reddy's election was all that mattered.

If the price asked for was to close the Morarji Desai chapter, that was already done. If Mrs Gandhi wanted an assurance to continue as Prime Minister till the 1972 poll, the Syndicate was willing to pass a resolution to that effect at a specially convened Congress Working Committee meeting. (I was called by Reddy to convey this to the Prime Minister's camp and I told Ahmed, who said that Nijalingappa should himself talk to Mrs Gandhi.)

But it appeared that Mrs Gandhi had decided that since a break-up of the party had to come sooner or later, it was to her advantage to have it sooner than later and in any case before the Presidential election.

Apparently with her approval, if not at her behest, the Young Turks, who appeared to enjoy immunity from disciplinary action even when they indulged in anti-Congress party activities, issued a statement that they intended to vote for Giri and not for the official Congress party candidate. But the Syndicate still hoped that the latest twist given to the dispute in the party was only a new form of pressure tactics by Mrs Gandhi.

Peace-makers jumped into the arena. At a Cabinet meeting Chavan, backed by Ram Subhag Singh, pleaded with Mrs Gandhi to consider the drastic consequences that would follow from the 'free vote' proposal. Mrs Gandhi was told that her critics were willing to confirm their faith in her leadership and to forget the Morarji Desai issue completely. But she had the Syndicate by the neck and did not want to lose the advantage.

Desai warned that if any member of the Congress party, however high, were to go against the party's decision 'disciplinary action will have to follow'. This did not, however, deter Mrs Gandhi's supporters from working against Reddy.

Even then but for form and formality the top Congress leaders of the two factions might have met at that time to discuss a rapprochement. Mrs Gandhi wanted Nijalingappa, Kamatji and Sanjiva Reddy to take the initiative and meet her, and they, on the other hand, wanted her to call on them.

On the eve of the Presidential poll, Mrs Gandhi did convey a message to them that they could meet her. But both Nijalingappa and Reddy were 'indisposed' and expected Mrs Gandhi to come to see them. Perhaps Mrs Gandhi did think of visiting them. For two days before the poll security men came to station themselves in Mr Nijalingappa's house—the usual sign of an impending VIP visit, and the expectation in the Congress President's quarters was that she would meet him. But this did not happen.

Mrs Gandhi and her supporters soon openly campaigned against Reddy. The Communists were their chief adherents. Among those who were often with Mrs Gandhi during this period were Krishna Menon, Bhagat Singh, the Communist party's leader in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament and Parvathi Krishnan, a Communist Party member and friend of Komaramangalam, a camp-follower who was later appointed Chairman of caucasian material air service Indian Airlines. Mrs Gandhi spoke over the telephone to all Chief Ministers, even to those who belonged to Governments headed by the Syndicate's supporters. The allegation levelled in Parliament was that her telephone calls in the month of August 1967 in the presidential election campaign were of full owing and the exchequer Rs. 1 lakh,* about £1,000. That was indeed a lot of it. Her appeal was direct; they should vote for Com. V. V. Giri who had for India or elsewhere a Prime Minister perfect or already against the candidate of the party. Much more the Prime Minister etc.

Her stakes were high. She feared—not entirely that the

*One hundred thousand.

would be thrown out after Reddy was elected. The Syndicate's supporters were saying that openly now.

Mrs Gandhi issued a last-minute appeal denouncing the Congress President's talks with the 'communal and Rightist forces'. She asked everybody to vote according to his or her conscience. In the draft statement there was a specific reference not to vote for Sanjiva Reddy but this was deleted at the last minute as she was advised that such an appeal might be tantamount to exertion of pressure of office and might be used as ground for a petition in court against Giri if he were elected.

She did well in not mentioning Reddy's name because an election petition against Giri's election was later made to the Supreme Court which, however, rejected it.

The average Congress party worker was surprised, confused and bewildered by the antics of his leaders. On the one hand was Mrs Gandhi who, he knew, had a popular image and on the other the organization towards which his loyalty was instinctive.

And when it came to casting votes, 62 per cent of the Congress party men in Parliament and two-thirds of those in the State stood by the party's official candidate. The Communist parties, the Sikh Akalis, Tamil Nadu's DMK and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (a group of ex-Congress party men) sided with the defectors. The SSP, the PSP and the independents were divided.

Even then Giri did not secure the required two-thirds of the votes polled at the first counting, getting 401,545 as against Reddy's 313,548. Second preference votes (112,769) of the supporters of C.D. Deshmukh, another candidate, had then to be counted; and a substantial number of them favoured Giri. (The President's election is through a single, transferable vote. If and when there is a second count, the second preference vote, as indicated, is added to those of the remaining contenders in the field.)

Giri's victory was narrow: a margin of 14,650 votes (420,077 as against 405,427). It was the most hotly contested Presidential election in India's history.

It was really Mrs Gandhi's victory and the way thousands swarmed to her place even at midnight, when the result was officially announced, was a tribute to her tenacity, defiance and supremacy. That night the Congress party's defectors and the

Communists danced together in the Central Hall of Parliament and hailed Reddy's defeat as 'the people's triumph'. D. P. Mishra took with him to Mrs Gandhi's house a toy drummer. 'The area we come from celebrates a victory by dinging it into the other's ears', he said.

Now the tide started moving in Mrs Gandhi's favour. Many who had voted for Reddy jumped on to her bandwagon. Right or Left, communal or secular, committed or free—all ran to Mrs Gaodhi's side.

The party bosses realized the heavy price they had paid in their effort not to do anything which might affect Reddy's election. They now regretted not having suspended at least Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed, if not Mrs Gandhi. Nijalingappa said later that he had drafted letters to suspend them but Kamaraj stopped him from sending them.

Though late, the Syndicate decided to act; they could hardly acquiesce to the establishment of the dubious precedent of 'free voting for members on a vital political issue involving the party's existence. They set the ball rolling a day after the election, without waiting for the election result.

Nijalingappa sent letters to Mrs Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram and Ahmed late at night asking them to explain why they had worked against the official candidate. Nijalingappa related the whole sequence of events since the decision on Reddy's nomination at Bangalore and questioned how discipline in the party could be maintained if they indulged in such actions.

He refused to repeat his earlier assurance to Mrs Gandhi that her position as Prime Minister would not be upset and declared that some Congress party men were 'knowingly or unknowingly playing into the hands of the Communists'.

Patil said in public that Mrs Gandhi and her supporters had used 'the propaganda technique of the Communists and Hitler' and that Giri was 'basically a Communist candidate and perhaps for that reason the favourite candidate of the Prime Minister'. Desai told journalists that Mrs Gandhi's serious breach of discipline could not be condoned.

Mrs Gandhi gave her reply in a speech she made before some MPs. She warned of disastrous consequences if disciplinary action was taken against the Congress party men who voted against Reddy. 'The matter will not end there', she war-

Discipline should not be 'narrowly interpreted' or be 'one-sided'.

She began explaining to her party MPs in groups—and often broke down in the midst of talking—that she fought back 'not because I was involved but because the Prime Ministership of India was involved'. She said she knew what anguish her father, Nehru, suffered during his last years because he could not stop the Congress party from straying from the socialist path. Thus it was not she who was leading the people to Communism but the factional attitude of the leadership.

Once again Mrs Gandhi said that 'the action of the leadership showed that it had aligned itself with parties totally opposed to the Congress party's ideology, its economic programme and policies.'

Persons like Jagjivan Ram were more defiant; they said they did not have to explain. In any case, the party bosses were nobodies; the electors were the ones who counted. 'Let us go back to them to seek their opinion', he said.

The Syndicate now openly said that Mrs Gandhi was a Communist and cited in support the way the Communists had rallied behind her. This angered her more and she hit back by saying that the doings of the party bosses had given the Communists a foothold in India.

She was not wrong. The two States, Kerala and West Bengal, had slipped from the hands of the Congress party because the party bosses had backed the wrong candidates in the elections.

In Kerala people were sick of 'the corrupt clique' in the Congress when it was in power. For months together, the people, particularly the youth, demanded the replacement of the Congress Chief Minister, Shankar, by a 'cleaner' person. But Kamaraj backed Shankar because he was his protege. Many then left the Congress party and formed a parallel body.

While Kamaraj's intransigence cost the Congress party Kerala at that time (March 1965), Atulya's cost the party West Bengal (March 1967). There again the people, particularly the younger Congressmen, groaned under Atulya's personal rule of the party. He controlled its machinery and funds and used both to further the interests of his clique. He did not allow the right type of partymen to come up. The Communists cashed in on that. The result: many staunch Congressmen left the party to escape

from his stranglehold, and the party, in turn lost its prestige and power.

A few months later, there came a time when many who had left the Congress in chagrin were willing to return to the fold provided Atulya's hold was loosened. Ajoy Mukherjee, who was the Chief Minister of a Communist-dominated coalition, was willing to join hands with the Congress party to form an anti-Communist Government.

But Kamaraj stood by Atulya despite Mrs Gandhi's blessings to Mukherjee's proposal. Later, Mukherjee parted company with the Communists but the Congress party had lost probably forever the psychological moment to retrieve the State from the Communists' control.

Therefore, Mrs Gandhi was quite justified in blaming the party bosses for paving the way for the Communist Governments in Kerala and West Bengal. But where she was criticized was that she gave respectability to the Communists. But where could the Communists have gone?

The Congress party had never forgiven the Indian Communists for betraying the national movement and for helping the war efforts in the early forties soon after the Soviet Union joined the Allies. While attacking them, Nehru was always particular in differentiating Indian Communists from other Communists in the world.

Mrs Gandhi's alliance with the Communists, even though only for the purpose of defeating the Syndicate, gave the impression that they were preferable to the party bosses. No wonder then that this later aroused expectations in the hearts of the Communists who asked Mrs Gandhi to forge an open alliance with them.

No doubt the Syndicate was peeved over its defeat and repeated the charge of Mrs Gandhi being pro-Communist to win public favour. (In India where religion is a way of life and where totalitarian methods are anathema to most, Communism represents something sacrilegious, anti-God and violent.)

By playing on this feeling of abhorrence, the Syndicate was confident that it would gain the support of party members. But it was wrong. This might have been possible before the bosses lost in the Presidential election. Now Mrs G^e victorious and she continued to be Prime Minister.

A meeting of 248 of the 436 Congress MPs adopted on 23 August a resolution expressing full confidence in Mrs Gandhi who had 'given a new dimension to the Congress and brought it closer to the people on the basis of accepted socio-economic programmes'.

Some members of the Congress party had signed on 16 August a letter demanding a special meeting of the All India Congress Committee to consider a vote of no-confidence in Nijalingappa.

But the overall feeling in the party was to stand united, to forget and forgive, to have Mrs Gandhi and the party bosses continue together, just like before. The unity-makers again moved in.

Chavan, who had voted with the Syndicate and had annoyed Mrs Gandhi in the process, now began his efforts to bring the two sides together. He saw Nijalingappa and requested him to meet Mrs Gandhi but he refused to do so unless she withdrew her allegation that he had conspired against her with the Swatantra party and the Jana Sangh. She did not agree, because this was one of her trump cards.

Subramaniam, summoned from Madras by Chavan to help in his unity efforts, appealed to Nijalingappa to withdraw the show-cause notices sent to Mrs Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed on the ground that as a party to the dispute he should not act as the judge. Nijalingappa rejected the plea.

Subramaniam then approached Kamaraj, who for the first time now criticized Mrs Gandhi in public for the 'arbitrary and unnecessary manner in which Desai was dismissed'.

But the Syndicate leaders, who had been riding the high horse till the result of the Presidential election was out, were now willing to settle if only Mrs Gandhi would express 'sincere regret' for her action—a face-saving device. Mrs Gandhi refused to oblige.

She was feeling more secure now, and with reason. Even before the Congress party's Working Committee met on 25 August to discuss the 'conduct of some members', it looked that the dice was loaded against the Syndicate. The members seemed evenly divided and disciplinary action against Mrs Gandhi appeared difficult. In New Delhi, where the meeting took place,

the atmosphere was so tense that the homes of the Congress party leaders were guarded by the police against possible violent demonstrations.

At the prodding of Desai, the Syndicate had drafted a resolution strongly disapproving the conduct of Mrs Gandhi and her associates during the election. However, there was no plan to suspend or oust them. But at the meeting even this resolution was not presented as the proceedings took an unexpected turn.

Nijalingappa's main anxiety was to convince everyone that he had not 'conspired' with the Jana Sangh and Swatantra. At the very beginning of the meeting he demanded the withdrawal of the charges against him.

As the charges had served their purpose, Mrs Gandhi's supporters saw no harm in dropping them, and a resolution was passed that the allegations made were 'on wrong assumptions based on information available at that time and therefore they are untenable'. After his 'exoneration', Nijalingappa's interest in the proceedings waned.

Chavan thought that the moment was now opportune to present a unity resolution. This had been prepared by Subramaniam with the help of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Two days before its presentation, Mrs Gandhi, Dixit, Mishra and Swaran Singh had approved of the draft. Chavan had made only a few changes before presenting it as his own.

As soon as the unity resolution was presented, Patil said: 'There is nothing objectionable in it, let us accept it' The Syndicate members were at a loss to make out what had happened to Patil. (Nijalingappa told me later that Patil's behaviour came as a surprise. 'Probably we are all getting old, losing grit and stamina', explained Nijalingappa) Patil's observation won over the waverers to the unity plan.

Desai alone wanted the battle to continue. He spoke at length against the resolution, and repeated the charge of indiscipline against Mrs Gandhi, demanding that she, Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed be punished. At one stage he threatened to walk out, but Kamaraj dissuaded him from doing that. Desai insisted that Mrs Gandhi should at least express 'regret'.

After much wrangling she agreed to have the words 'while it is painful and unfortunate that a large segment of the Congress voters failed to support Mr Reddy' incorporated in the reso-

lution. A decisive role was played by Brahmananda Reddy, Naik and Sukhadia, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan respectively, who said the talk of discipline would hamper the working of legislative parties in the States. In fact, they were for the status quo.

When Chavan's resolution was adopted with a few amendments, it looked as if both sides had been accommodated. The resolution said:

No political party can progress unless there is a sense of solidarity among its members. Disciplined conduct and behaviour is an essential ingredient for the proper functioning of the party. However, this can be effectively ensured only on the basis of strict adherence to party policies and programmes and internal democracy within the party involving party organs at various levels.

But it was another victory for Mrs Gandhi and her associates. Jagjivan Ram and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed had been exonerated. The Syndicate knew that it had again been outsmarted; it could not have gathered the required majority to censure Mrs Gandhi, much less to turn her out, with some of its own members like Ram Subhag Singh, Patil and Abraham all for unity. Nijalingappa admitted as much to me later.

After the meeting, Kamaraj told Chavan: 'You betrayed us'. There was no doubt that it was Chavan who had brought about 'unity'—and sidetracked the issue that the meeting was to discuss. He was playing his cards well.

He did not wish to identify himself with the Syndicate, which had come to acquire a conservative ring. Nor did he want to alienate the Syndicate completely because he thought he would one day become the compromise candidate for the two sides.

Mrs Gandhi's supporters welcomed the resolution and they held a victory dance near where the Working Committee had met. The Syndicate's supporters felt small. One of them, Mrs Tarkeshwari Sinha, said that the Prime Minister's opponents would 'operate independently', adding: 'If they can get away with it, we can also do the same.' Nijalingappa commented: 'If this is how they want the Congress party affairs to be con-

ducted, what can I do?' Kamaraj aptly commented on the unity resolution: 'We have deceived ourselves.'

But most Congress party members and the country in general were relieved that the party had remained united. They knew that the cracks had only been papered over, but it still gave them a sense of security.

The Communists, however, were displeased. They wanted polarization with the Congress party dividing into Left and Right. Even though they did not consider Mrs Gandhi's men 'progressive' enough to be called even Leftists, they foresaw chances of greater influence if the party was split. Even when the split did take place, they considered it a fight among the petty bourgeoisie.

Like the Communists, Mishra, Mrs Gandhi's principal adviser, was unhappy—but for different reasons. As master tactician, he was unhappy that Mrs Gandhi had agreed to withdraw the charge of 'conspiracy' against Nijalingappa. He was so upset that she sent Dixit to pacify him and explain that she had held her ground in the Working Committee almost until the end.

A week after the unity resolution Mishra told her that even though she had won by defeating Sanjiva Reddy, if she wanted to stay in power she must control the organization. He suggested that a meeting of the All India Congress Committee be requisitioned to consider a no-confidence motion against Nijalingappa.

Mrs Gandhi was first indifferent to the suggestion; when Mishra left Delhi, the signature campaign for the requisition stopped. But later she also saw that she must capture the organization for her own survival. To rally support, she began touring the States. To her own surprise, she got a great welcome wherever she went. (In Calcutta more than 100,000 people attended her meeting.) The nationalization of the banks and the way she had fought like a man against the Syndicate had won her popularity.

People saw in her 'the leader of the new generation' and 'a friend of the poor', and even her critics conceded that she was a 'man among women'. And she also plugged the line that the top Congress leaders were against her because she refused to compromise on 'matters vital to the interests of the people'.

The Syndicate meanwhile stepped up its campaign against her. On the one hand they blamed her for bringing the Congress party under Communist influence and on the other for not implementing radical economic measures. They knew that talk of 'progressive steps' appealed to the people and they began speaking the same language. 'She headed the Government; what stopped her from introducing a radical programme?' they asked.

Following Mrs Gandhi's example, Desai also toured some States. He accused her of defeating the Congress party's nominee for the Presidency. Nijalingappa alleged at a Press conference (4 September) that the Communists had infiltrated the Congress organization at all levels. It was apparent that the truce between the two factions was no longer in operation.

But before challenging the party bosses, Mrs Gandhi wanted to win over Chavan completely. He was still sitting on the fence and talking about unity; his stance had encouraged many others to act likewise.

Mishra wrote a letter to him to ask why he was anxious to stay with persons (meaning the party bosses) who did not believe in the Leftist programme. Chavan did not reply to the letter; instead he rang up Mishra to say that he did not want to leave the Congress party because all those who had left it in the past had ultimately become insignificant.

At that time, Mrs Gandhi's supporters were not sure of capturing the organization. They were thinking of only constituting a separate group in the parliamentary party. But whether for controlling the organization or for forming another one, the support of Chavan, the boss of Maharashtra, was important.

Subramaniam, who had worked with Chavan in attempts to restore unity in the party after Reddy's defeat, was pressed into service. Mishra asked Mrs Gandhi, who was touring South India then, to bring Subramaniam to Delhi in her plane and she followed his advice.

Mishra suggested the line of action. Subramaniam met Chavan and told him that if he continued to waver, his opponents like Dinesh Singh would dominate Mrs Gandhi. If he wanted her to listen to him he should be unreservedly with her. This worked. Subramaniam later thanked Mishra and said: 'Your argument clinched the matter.'

Once Chavao was woo over, Mrs Gaodhi's group plaooned to capture the organization. In Nijalingappa's camp she had a loyal supporter in Shankar Dayal Sharma, ooe of the General Secretaries of the Congress party. According to Nijaliogappa it was Sharma who put up a note to him sayiog that Tripathi, the Uttar Pradesh Congress party's President, aod Kokaoi Venkataratnam, Andhra Pradesh party chief, could not remain members of the Congress party's Working Committee because both had accepted Cabinet posts in their respective States. (Accordiog to the party's resolution of 1949 and confirmed in 1952 members could not hold organizational and Cabioet posts simultaneously.)

Nijaliogappa told me later that he did not eveo recall the resolution but when it was pointed out to him he realized that he could 'puoish' Tripathi, who had sided with Mrs Gaodhi

In his note Sharma also suggested that Subramaniam could oot remain a Working Committee member because he had ceased to be President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. (Only a couple of days earlier, Kamaraj, the unquestioned king of the Coogress party in Tamil Nadu, had puoished Subramaniam for his loyalty to Mrs Gaodhi hy sponsoring a petition demanding his resignation; Suhramaniam readily agreed.)

Letters were drafted to be sent to the three leaders. Thinkiog that they had been posted Sharma communicated this to Mrs Gaodhi's camp, which was looking for an opportunity to join issue with the Syndicate. But Nijaliogappa changed his mind at the last minute aod did not send the letter to Suhramaniam.

When Tripathi received the letter he said that he contioued to hold the presidency of the State party because Nijalingappa himself had remained Chief Minister of Mysore for several mooths after his election as party president. However, Tripathi came runniog to Delhi.

A conference was held at Mrs Gandhi's house where it was decided to send a joint letter to Nijalingappa. The letter, sent once again late in the evening (8 October), was signed by Mrs Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Suhramaniam and Chavao; it protested against Nijalingappa's 'arbitrary' orders in 'removing C. Suhramaniam from the Working Committee, and Kamlapati Tripathi and K. Venkataratnam from various offices in the organization on the basis of some resolutions assed

two decades ago....' (The letter sought to advance the meeting of the Congress Working Committee from 30 October to around 15 October and suggested a meeting of the bigger body, the All India Congress Committee, before 15 November.)

Nijalingappa was on strong ground to deny action against Subramaniam. And peeved as he was over the receipt of the letter, Nijalingappa pointed out that Subramaniam was 'an ex-officio member of the AICC in view of his being President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee; now that he has ceased to be President of the TNCC, the position needs to be gone into....'

On the same day (9 October) Chavan explained at a Press conference that the main purpose of the letter was to avert any action that might bring about a cleavage in the party. The signatories had acted on 'information that some such thing was being done'. But he retracted from the demand for requisitioning the All India Congress Committee meeting before 15 November. He thought this could be a matter of discussion.

This equivocal statement worried Mrs Gandhi's supporters. They wanted Chavan to be completely on their side. He had 35 Lok Sabha members from Maharashtra behind him. More than that there were many who were sitting on the fence waiting to see which side Chavan would choose. Mishra told me later that had Chavan joined hands with the party bosses, they would have won.

During these days, Subramaniam issued a statement that Kamaraj had offered Chavan the Premiership. This more than anything else made Chavan stick to Mrs Gandhi through thick and thin. With Chavan's support assured, Mrs Gandhi struck.

She asked four junior Ministers, Parimal Ghosh, M. S. Gurupadaswamy, Jagannath Pahadia and J. B. Muthyal Rao, considered to be supporters of the Syndicate, to quit. (Two of them she took back after six months.)

Similarly, Ram Subhag Singh, then Railway Minister, was asked to resign when he refused to join hands with her. This was her warning to her opponents that if they persevered in their attempts to force her supporters out of key posts in the Congress organization in the States, she would refashion her Cabinet.

At the same time, her supporters launched a campaign to secure signatures to a petition to the Congress party Working Com-

mittee to consider the election of a new party President by 31 December. Probably, one purpose of the campaign was to warn Nijalingappa not to press for the removal of Subramaniam from the Working Committee. This had its effect and Subramaniam received an invitation to attend the Committee meeting on 21 October.

Mrs Gandhi stopped then. She sent her emissaries to find out how many members of the AICC were with her. Finding the count in her favour, she encouraged her supporters to openly demand the election of a new President for the Congress party.

In a draft resolution, signed among others by Chavan, it was argued that 'the declared policies of the Congress cannot be fully implemented unless the Congress organization as a whole is attuned to this purpose and gives it wholehearted cooperation, particularly at the top level'. The signatories demanded that a new Congress President be elected by December 1969 'when the term of the present President would have ordinarily come to an end'.

Nijalingappa kept his own counsel. He could see that Mrs Gandhi wanted one of her own men as Congress party President. The second—in fact the final—round was beginning. He did not want to be beaten this time and summoned a meeting of the Syndicate. Desai was particularly egging him on to take 'firm action' against Mrs Gandhi.

The atmosphere was now building up to a climax. The waning lustre of bank nationalization bothered Mrs Gandhi but she was still the only person who had an all-India image. Desai's was confined to Gujarat, Nijalingappa's to Mysore and Kamaraj's to Tamil Nadu and one or two other southern States.

The party bosses did not mistake Mrs Gandhi's intentions this time. They tried to win back Chavan but he preferred to stay with her. He had changed his loyalty once and had earned a bad name. He did not want to do it again. Moreover he could not run away from the fact that Mrs Gandhi's opponents were those with a Rightist image. He stood left of Centre.

The Syndicate first took a legalistic stand. There was no provision in the party constitution for a motion of no-confidence in the President and, if it had to be done, only the party's plenary session could do it, not the AICC. Mrs Gandhi's supporters

argued that the decision to extend Nijalingappa's term for another year was taken not by the plenary session but by the Congress party's Working Committee.

Nijalingappa then issued an appeal saying that the two sides should sit together and thrash out all matters. But it was too late. The Prime Minister sent him word that unity could be preserved only if he resigned. Had he done so, the Congress party would have probably faced a different situation.

When nothing seemed to work, Nijalingappa, much against his wishes, wrote on 28 October a strong letter to Mrs Gandhi. Desai and Asoka Mehta prepared the draft, which accused her of conducting 'a campaign of vilification' against the party President, of seeking the support of the Communists and other Opposition parties to defame the Congress party and of starting a 'personality cult' in preparation for the establishment of 'one-man rule' in the party organization and Government. He hinted that she might be removed from the leadership of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

The letter was not released to the Press because by that time persons like K.C. Abraham had jumped into the arena to see if unity was possible at that late hour. Now the party bosses did not want unity on her terms; it could be only on theirs.

As the meeting of the Congress Working Committee approached, tension mounted. Both sides claimed a majority—at least 11 of the 21 members. The Syndicate got worried when Sharma, regarded as a strong supporter, resigned his post as one of three General Secretaries, and joined Mrs Gandhi's camp.

But the party bosses wanted to be certain that she would have no chance of getting a majority. And to make this doubly sure, one day before the meeting it was decided to drop from the Committee two supporters of Mrs Gandhi, Subramaniam and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed—the former because he had ceased to be eligible to membership since he was no longer President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and the latter because a permanent invitee could not be a person whose 'activities' during the Presidential election were 'harmful' to the party.

The purpose of Nijalingappa's action was clear: to boost the morale of the Syndicate followers and to make them realize that they were determined to accept Mrs Gandhi's challenge and

would fight her all the way. The plan was to put her on the mat and let her face a Working Committee where she would be in a minority. But, except for Desai, they had no intention of ousting her from the party.

An aide of Patil disclosed to Mrs Gandhi the Syndicate's decision, which, as had become the practice, was to be communicated late in the evening so as not to allow time to the rival camp to plan counter-measures. Getting wind of the Syndicate's plans, she convened an urgent meeting of her supporters, who once again checked with Patil's aide the news about the decision to drop Subramaniam and Ahmed from the Congress party's Working Committee. When the report was confirmed, they knew that there was no option but to fight back.

Mrs Gandhi decided to boycott the Working Committee meeting and convened separately a meeting of her supporters in the Working Committee—at the same time and on the same day. Simultaneously, a requisition reportedly signed by 405 of the 709 elected AICC members was sent to Nijalingappa's house—again late in the evening. Gupta challenged the genuineness of some of the signatures said to be of men from his State, U.P. His suspicion was correct; H. N. Bahuguna, a U.P. Congress leader who later became the Secretary of Mrs Gandhi's Congress, admitted to me later that there were some forgeries.

Abraham, the unity maker, attended both meetings. And at both he pleaded for unity. None could doubt his sincerity. The Syndicate gave him two days, and action against Mrs Gandhi was withheld to see the outcome of his efforts. It also decided not to release to the Press the letter which Nijalingappa had written to Mrs Gandhi and which had been kept secret. Abraham's endeavour was to arrange for a meeting between the Congress President and the Prime Minister and he knew that it would be impossible once the letter was out.

He almost brought round Mrs Gandhi to meet Nijalingappa without any pre-conditions. So did the Congress Chief Ministers, who met at the instance of Ram Subhag Singh and Chavan who were keen to preserve the party's unity. The former asked Gupta and the latter Naik to mediate.

The Chief Ministers met. Chaliha wanted an early session of the AICC to discuss all issues, without spelling them out. G-

proposal was that the Congress party should reiterate that Mrs Gandhi continue as Prime Minister until the next elections in 1972 and Nijalingappa as Congress party President until the end of 1970. When Kamaraj came to know of this proposal, he said a fair compromise would be that both should continue until 1972.

The meeting got bogged down over the move sponsored by Mrs Gandhi to requisition a meeting of the AICC to end the Congress President's term by the end of 1969. Why not present the requisition demand as a resolution to which the Congress President should accord priority? That suggestion had the blessing of Nijalingappa, as indicated by the Mysore Chief Minister, Veerendra Patil, present at the meeting. The Congress party President, he said, was willing to step down 'if everything was done in a proper manner'.

The Chief Ministers agreed that once the requisition move was withdrawn and given another shape, the return of Ahmed to the Congress Working Committee would be easier. Subramaniam's inclusion in the Committee, they thought, could wait until after his re-election to the AICC or until legal advice was sought on whether he could continue as a Working Committee member without being the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress party Committee.

There were many other hurdles but they did not look insurmountable. And in any case, there was no harm if Mrs Gandhi and Nijalingappa met. The Chief Ministers were optimistic about finding a way out.

Abraham met Mrs Gandhi, who said 'yes' to a meeting with Nijalingappa. But even before Abraham was out of the Prime Minister's Secretariat the contents of Nijalingappa's letter were out on the ticker of a news agency. Abraham went post haste to the Congress President's residence. Nijalingappa expressed his regret. His explanation was that it was the news agency's scoop. But the fact was that Nijalingappa had given a copy of his letter to Kamaraj and it was he who had leaked it out. Poor Abraham was back to square one.

Abraham did not give in. He again met the Prime Minister, but she no longer saw much hope of a compromise. However, she asked him to talk to Jagjivan Ram. And it was he who

called Abraham late at night to postpone his departure from Delhi for the second time.

The two sides should meet and talk—this was Ahraham's formula. He suggested a conference of 10—five from each side. Desai preferred a bigger summit meeting, but Mrs Gandhi was in favour of meeting Nijalingappa alone.

Things looked hopeful once again. Veerendra Patil, the Mysore Chief Minister, flew from Bangalore. He knew his own troubles in the Ministry would start once the Congress party got divided. Ahraham and Veerendra Patil met; they separately had talks with the Prime Minister, the Congress party President, Jagjivan Ram, and many others. The ground for the summit meeting was prepared.

Jagjivan Ram offered his residence as the venue. Desai opposed it; he said Jagjivan Ram was trying to 'rehabilitate' himself. Desai also made sure that Nijalingappa would not commit himself to anything while talking to Mrs Gandhi; he would place all proposals before the Working Committee. Kamatraj, who was consulted over the telephone, said the same thing.

The summit meeting did not last long. When Mrs Gandhi suggested that they should reaffirm the unity resolution of the Congress party and invite Ahmed and Subramaniam to attend the Working Committee meeting, Nijalingappa said that he was willing to do so provided there was status quo ante—in other words Desai should be taken back in the Cabinet. Mrs Gandhi first refused but then said she would consult her colleagues. The talks were to be resumed at dinner.

In the evening Mrs Gandhi sent word to Nijalingappa that her colleagues were not agreeable to taking back Desai in the Cabinet. The dinner meeting was cancelled. When the meeting did not materialize some journalists jokingly said that Dinesh Singh did not let the meeting take place because the condition was that he would have to taste the food first!

What probably kept Mrs Gandhi from pursuing unity efforts further was the realization that the party bosses were still not prepared to give the pre-eminent position to the Prime Minister vis-a-vis the party.

Now both sides began preparing for the inevitable—the split. The Syndicate turned Mrs Gandhi out of the Congress party and

she in turn blessed the meeting of the members who were on her side. They (441 of the 705 elected members) met in Delhi on 22 November and passed a vote of no-confidence against Nijalingappa. Later, they followed it up with a bigger session in Bombay. Others met near Ahmedabad and put up a more impressive show.

Consequently, there were two Congresses and both claimed to be the 'real one'. In newspaper offices it was a problem how to differentiate one from the other. We in *The Statesman* thought that we should call the Syndicate's Congress old and Mrs Gandhi's new. But we gave up the idea because the word 'old' had a connotation of something outdated, and this would not be fair to the party bosses. We settled for Congress (O) meaning thereby the Congress Organization. Once when I referred to the Syndicate's side as the Congress (Organization) during an interview with Mrs Gandhi, she objected to it. 'What do you mean by Organization? We are the organization.'

For Mrs Gandhi's side we used the word Congress (R) which meant really the party of requisitionists, but (R) came to be known as the ruling party.

It was not only the name which was in dispute; both sides quarrelled over the possession of the polling symbol.* Two yoked bullocks, the Congress party's symbol, was popular with the rural electorate. Both approached the Election Commission for its allotment and claimed to represent the real Congress party. The Commission, after a year's deliberations, pronounced (12 January 1971) that both factions had gone wrong in turning each other out of the party; Mrs Gandhi's exclusion was wrong and so was Nijalingappa's.

Since the Congress (R), the Commission said, had majority support in the undivided party in Parliament, State legislatures and among AICC delegates, it was entitled to the symbol of two yoked bullocks and the name of 'Indian National Congress'. The Indian Supreme Court struck down this ruling (20 January 1971) and froze the symbol until after the mid-term poll when the case would be heard again.

* Since 70 per cent of the electorate is illiterate, the ballot papers carry the symbol of the party with the candidate's name.

The party bosses blamed Mrs Gandhi for the split in the party and accused her of misusing the machinery of the Government to pressurize people and offer inducements to strengthen her own position and promote a 'personality cult'.

Her claim was that she stood for 'pro-people' policies and progress while the Syndicate stood for feudalism and capitalism. And she had parted company with the party bosses for the sake of India's progress.

Who was correct? Probably both. She did want her leadership to be supreme and the party bosses did look like persons steeped in outdated policies. But, in the process, the two sides murdered a party which provided a Centre; now the field was more open for the extreme Right, particularly the Jana Sangh, and the extreme Left, particularly the Communists. Subsequent events proved that.

CHAPTER 2

Economics of Ideology

THE CONGRESS PARTY PROGRAMMES had an ideological edge until 1955, but the thrust was liberal, not radical. At its annual session in Avadi (near Madras) the Congress party announced that year that its aim was to establish 'a socialistic pattern of society'. A similar statement was made in Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) in 1964.

But this announcement meant precious little. It was as airy as Nehru's hope, expressed in his autobiography published long before India's independence, for 'the establishment of a socialist order, first within national boundaries and eventually in the world'.

The same sentiments were incorporated in the Indian Constitution in a directive principle: 'The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood' and 'that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment'.

The Congress party had gone to the polls four times since independence on the same plank. The 1962 election manifesto said: 'The fundamental problem in India is not only to increase greatly the living standards of the people but also to bring about progressively social and economic equality.'

In 1967, at the time of the general election, the Congress party went a step further and promised to every individual 'a national minimum comprising the essential requirements in respect of food,

clothing, housing, education and health'. (The range and content of this minimum have remained undefined. Even the target date of 1975 spelt out at Bhubaneshwar is no longer mentioned.)

'We spoke of socialism because that was what went down well with the masses', Mrs Gandhi told me in July 1969 soon after asking Desai to hand over the Finance portfolio. She claimed that the Syndicate controlling the undivided Congress party had 'no faith in progressive measures', and that was why she had to break with them.

The point that Mrs Gandhi was making to me was that the return of the Congress party in a majority to Parliament and most State legislatures on the basis of its electoral promises indicated that the people wanted the country to move towards the left of centre. But the Syndicate was in the way. She had to make good the promises given since independence and before to sustain the people's confidence in the Congress party and to stop them from turning Communist.

The party bosses dismissed her charges; they thought that she was looking for scapegoats. After all, it was either she or her father, Nehru, who was to blame if the 'socialistic' measures the party had outlined were not implemented during their regimes.

When Mrs Gandhi criticized the lack of progress in early 1968 at one of the Congress party Working Committee meetings, Kamaraj, one of the party bosses, remarked 'Why does not she take over the Finance portfolio herself?' A year later when she presented her famous 'stray thoughts' before the Bangalore Working Committee, Kamaraj said that it was for her the Prime Minister, to implement them.

Again, when the major banks were taken over Desai said that it was she who had rejected nationalization some months earlier in favour of close 'social control' of the banks. She was entitled to change her mind, but the timing of the change was suspect to Desai's eyes. He also reminded her how, after working out costs, which seemed heavy, she had given up the idea of nationalizing general insurance.

The party bosses said that she was giving * 'to the hands of the Communists and recalled how the U.C.C. Congress party's

*Explained in Chapter I

setback in the 1967 elections there was a demand for more radical steps and how the Working Committee had responded to it by adopting on 12 May 1967 a 10-point programme. This called for :

- (1) 'Social control' of the banks, (2) nationalization of general insurance, (3) progressive take-over of export and import trade by State agencies, (4) State trading in foodgrains at the wholesale level, (5) organization of consumer co-operatives in urban and rural areas, (6) effective steps to curb monopolies and concentration of economic power, (7) provision of minimum needs to the entire community by the earliest feasible date, (8) ceilings on individual holdings of urban property, (9) prompt implementation of land reforms, and (10) abolition of the princes' privileges as well as privy purses.

If precept was not put into practice it was the Government which was to blame not the party, they said.

Mrs Gandhi admitted that most of the programme had remained unfulfilled but she said that it was the party bosses, not the Government, who were at fault. Even Nehru, she alleged, was not able to do all that he wanted to because of them, though he was able to oust them from the Government through the Kamaraj plan* of 1963. (At that time, Jagjivan Ram, now with Mrs Gandhi, was also dropped from the Central Cabinet. She brought him back in 1966.)

And as for the charge that she was playing the Communists' game, her answer was that it was the party bosses who were making the people look to the Communists for succour. 'If I don't do anything to take the wind out of the sails of the Communists, the entire country will go red', Mrs Gandhi told me. She said that the Communists had already established a foothold in Kerala and West Bengal; the country must move to the left of centre to defeat them.

Nationalization of banks was one of the key steps in her endeavour to do so. Indeed, it was a commendable step to divert a proportion of banks' loan funds to ordinary farmers,

*See Chapter 1.

small businessmen and entrepreneurs who were being left out in the cold. Their efforts to improve their lot came to precisely nothing because they hardly had any access to the banks which, in fact, deteriorated in efficiency as days went by.

Whatever her motives, she was able to prove that she was the only one who could implement boldly and courageously what the Congress party had wistfully desired and had failed to carry out. Nehru had only dreamt of nationalization of banks* but did not clothe it with reality even though he was Prime Minister from 1947 to 1964.

By itself the nationalization of banks implied no ideological upheaval; France and Italy operated through nationalized banks, and this made no difference to the texture of their economies. Even the U.S. Ambassador to India, Keating, had spoken with understanding and sympathy about Mrs Gandhi's decision. Opinion in the West, by and large, was that the step was neither frivolous nor motivated solely by a desire for personal political gains, it reflected the determination of a Prime Minister to take the bold steps needed to push India's economy forward.

Indeed, it would have been effective if Mrs Gandhi had a well-studied plan for follow-up action. She had none. There was no scheme, no blueprint to say how the deposits were to be invested and where. The whole operation was done in unseemly haste, to win public applause and tilt the balance in favour of her group in the presidential election.

In fact, when within an hour of Mrs Gandhi taking over the Finance portfolio she asked the Minister of State for the bank nationalization ordinance in a day's time. T. P. Singh, then Finance Secretary, expressed unhappiness. She showed her a week-old letter of L. K. Jha, at that time Governor of the Reserve Bank, arguing that nationalization was neither feasible nor 'desirable'. Mrs Gandhi insisted. T. P. Singh was later moved to the Ministry of Steel and L. K. Jha appointed India's Ambassador.

The Deputy Chairman : - Chairman Committee

*He argued in favour of the "right of self-government in the Indian Empire," of India, which he wrote "was the right of the people."

D. R. Gadgil, was never consulted. He came to know about the decision after it had been made.

The manner in which Mrs Gandhi had brushed aside objections to the mode of nationalization was known to Cabinet Ministers at the time they were summoned to consider the draft Ordinance. They did not take even five minutes to give their approval. In the midst of the chorus of 'yes, yes', Govinda Menon, then Law Minister, who had earlier objected to the issuing of an Ordinance with only 24 hours to go for the beginning of Parliament's session, kept quiet.

The legislation, on the heels of the Ordinance, was also a rash job. Jana Sangh and Swatantra members effectively challenged the measure in the Supreme Court. Government lawyers found it tough going and Krishna Menon, the former pro-Communist Defence Minister, engaged as a lawyer by the Communist Kerala Government to assist the Centre in the case, advised Mrs Gandhi to engage Michael Foot, the British lawyer, to buttress the Government's case; otherwise, Menon feared, the Government might lose. She did not agree to the proposal.

Nationalization was one of the 'stray thoughts' that Mrs Gandhi had 'jotted down' in the note she had given the Congress Working Committee at Bangalore where began the parting of ways between her and the party bosses. And, as New Delhi explained to foreign countries through its missions, the step did not suggest any leaning towards Communism; the Congress party had implemented what it had promised a long time ago.

During those days, certain Communists tried to bring pressure on the Supreme Court by threatening some judges on the bench with impeachment.^{*} As many as 47 MPs, including some from Mrs Gandhi's group, signed a petition for their impeachment. But she came to know of the move and scotched it.

The Supreme Court threw out the nationalization Act on the

^{*}A deputation of the Sikh Akalis was sent to Gurdial Singh Dhillon, the Sikh Lok Sabha Speaker, to press on him to admit the impeachment petition against Justice J.C. Shah, who had presided over the bench hearing an appeal against the Bank Nationalization Act. The plea given to Dhillon was that Shah was the person who had recommended the inclusion of Chandigarh in the Hindu-dominated Haryana in preference to the Sikh-dominated Punjab.

ground that the compensation proposed was unfairly low; and that while the Government could legally take over banks it could not stop their corporate owners from engaging in banking and non-banking business on par with the banks which had been left out of the scheme of nationalization.

The revised Act was reportedly only a slight improvement. Its opponents did not, however, challenge it when they found that the 'progressives' had reconciled themselves to a 50 per cent increase in compensation in the new Act. They then thought it better to let sleeping dogs lie.

After winning a respite from legal difficulties, the Government selected directors for the nationalized banks. The criterion was not who had the merit or the requisite qualification but who had pro Government views. New Delhi had its intelligence wing check on the credentials of those selected.

Anyhow, Mrs Gandhi earned the reputation of trying to 'achieve something' at a time when the rate of growth averaged two to three per cent a year, half of what was planned. In the nationalization of banks, and more so in her, the public saw the welcome beginning in putting Congress precept into practice.

When she had Parliament dissolved* (27 December 1970) she plugged the same line in a broadcast 'Time will not wait for us... the millions who demanded food, shelter and jobs are pressing for action'

* * *

The Congress had always been a party of high ideals. This was partly because it had as its unquestioned leader Gandhi, popularly known as the Mahatma (Great Soul). The British were the enemy, he said, but were not to be hated; they had to go, but were not to be driven out by violence. They were foes, but also friends. That was why the Indian bands played *Bande Matram*, an Indian revolutionary song, and then *Auld Lang Syne* to the British soldiers as they left through the Gateway of India, Bombay, on 15 August 1947.

As Mahatma Gandhi had said, independence meant not only

*For details see Chapter 4.

political freedom but freedom from hunger and want. And in the first years of independence there was an overemphasis on the past glory but also a fervour—and willingness—to build India.

At the same time there was a naive belief that the problem of underdevelopment and poverty would find an easy, if not an automatic solution, with the dawn of independence. It was a strange mixture of over-enthusiasm, over-confidence and over-expectation. Left unharnessed, enthusiasm was bound to change into disillusionment and this was what happened.

Had the same pre-independence spirit of sacrifice and selflessness which had distinguished the Congress party from others persisted, India would have probably found missionaries to lead the country to prosperity. But the spirit of dedication rapidly evaporated after the last British soldier left.

The Congress party members were now a new set of masters who wanted reward for the sufferings they had undergone in the struggle for freedom. Almost overnight the party became a squabbling crowd of white-clad, white-capped self-seekers jostling one another for power and riches.

Mahatma Gandhi had prescribed 'simple living and high thinking'. He had himself discarded all clothes except a loin cloth to represent the average poor, ill-clothed Indian. But the Congress party's Ministers wore silk khadi, occupied big houses, rode in sleek limousines and led such an ostentatious life that emphasis turned on extravagance, not on saving.

Persons who had taken pride in living in small huts to show kinship with the poor and hungry masses of the country now wanted palaces. Soon after his appointment as Food Minister in 1947, Rajendra Prasad, who later became the first President of India, went to Mahatma Gandhi to seek his blessings. He advised him to stay in the Bhangi (Sweepers') Colony in Delhi where the Mahatma himself stayed at times. Prasad was so hurt by the suggestion that he complained to Nehru about it. Prasad never went to the Bhangi Colony; instead he occupied a six-acre mansion.

Later, during Mrs Gandhi's time, there was a proposal to move Ministers into smaller houses. But she herself stalled it on the ground that Ministers as public men were required to

meet a number of persons and had, therefore, to live in big houses.

It was not only the big houses where the British rulers had lived that the new rulers wanted, but they also desired most of the trappings. In the old days, whenever the British Viceroy travelled, traffic, even on a busy road, was stopped; the practice continued whenever Nehru moved around as the Prime Minister.

Once Lady Mountbatten, visiting India after her husband's retirement as India's first post-independence Governor-General, was held up for about 30 minutes on a Bombay road because Nehru was passing that way. When she reached late for a meeting over which he was presiding, Nehru jokingly remarked: 'You have held up our deliberations.' She explained how traffic policemen allowed her to go only after he had passed.

Nehru then had the Home Ministry issue a circular not to stop traffic for the Prime Minister. But even today the practice continues.

Again when Nehru was the Prime Minister, the Auditor-General of India pointed out to the Government that the 'actual income' of Central Ministers, taken together with their perquisites like free house, free car, free water and electricity and free servants, was more than what the executive councillors of the British Viceroys ever got.

He suggested that it would be far better for Ministers to get higher salaries and pay for the rest—which incidentally would have meant also payment of more taxes. Since Mahatma Gandhi had indicated before independence that a Congress Minister should get only Rs 500 a month (then equal roughly to £ 36) Ministers had taken a reduced basic salary but added on income-tax free perks. The Auditor-General's advice was dismissed as mere impertinence.

Compared to some other countries, the perks were not fabulous. But in India where per capita income is less than £ 40 a year, Ministers appeared to be wallowing in luxury. Mahatma Gandhi had outlined for them the role of trustees who should be a model of simple living to their charges—the people—and ensure that the nation's wealth was utilized only for the people's good.

His ideal was probably too lofty because renunciation is a goal, not a way of living. It is difficult to hold down deliberately

living standards and consumption of goods, particularly in the case of a nation which has long lived on the periphery of want.

**CENTRAL CABINET MINISTERS' SALARIES, ALLOWANCES
AND PERQUISITES AS IN 1970**

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Rs. (Net: free of tax)</i>
Salary (Rs. 27,000 Less Tax Rs. 5,280)	21,720
Sumptuary Allowance	6,000
Rent of Bungalow	7,800
Rent of Furniture and Appliances	7,704
Gardeners, Watchmen and Sweepers (420 × 12)	5,040
Maintenance, Repairs and Decoration of Bungalow and Grounds	15,040
Furniture and Appliances (₹ x 20,000)	say 10,000
Electricity and Water	2,400
Motor Car: Personal Use	
Driver's Salary (200 × 12)	2,400
Petrol (500 × 12)	6,000
Depreciation (20 per cent of 21,000)	4,200
Interest (10 per cent of 21,000)	2,100
Insurance	600
	(15,300 × 1/5th)
Personal Travelling	3,060*
Personal Telephone	(30,000 × 1/5th) 6,000*
	(6,000 × 1/5th) 1,200*
TOTAL	70,924

There was, in fact, a set of moral and ethical values which had governed Indian life in the past, even though people generally had not lived up to them. Mahatma Gandhi saw that and made an appeal in the name of a constructive programme—spinning yarn for one's own needs, restricting meals to one dish, abstaining from drinking† and so on. He had an eye on the savings which the country required to develop. The *charkha* (spinning wheel) represented a humble effort at self-reliance; it was a message not a machine.

* One-fifth taken for 'Personal Use', this being well-established practice in Income-Tax assessments.

† Prohibition is one of the directive principles of State policy in the Indian Constitution. The entire country was to go dry by 2 October 1970, the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi. Instead, there is now more drinking than ever before and the Government is gradually scrapping prohibition.

For Gandhi development was not an economic problem alone; it encompassed an individual's whole life. Therefore, he insisted that Ministers should shed form and formality, to set an example of simple living so that on the one hand the people's needs did not outstrip their earnings and, on the other, they saved money for constructive purposes.

But the Congress party leaders who by force of circumstance or tactical necessity had been living austere during the independence movement took no time in adopting the ways of the British rulers. Ministers copied the Viceroy's Executive Councillors and Governors their predecessors, while the Indian Civil Service pursued the same old traditions of keeping a distance between the ruler and the ruled. (The indigenous counterpart, the Indian Administrative Service men, followed in their footsteps and their main complaint was that their pay and privileges were less than those of the ICS.)

After some time, Nehru, himself occupying the palatial house where once lived the British commander-in-chief of India, did try to trim the trappings of Ministers by ordering them not to use rail-car saloons, not to fly the national flag on their cars to flaunt authority and not to have security men and peons trailing behind them. But he never saw to the implementation of his instructions. Nor did his Ministers take him seriously.

The State Governors were the worst examples and even today they fly personal standards, live in 10 to 20 bedroom houses called Raj Bhavans and retreat to equally big summer villas during the hot weather.

Before the sixties these Raj Bhavans were partly used to accommodate visiting Central and other Ministers. But when Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, once ambassador to the US and the Soviet Union, served as Governor of Maharashtra and complained to her brother, Nehru, that Raj Bhavans were being used as 'Dak Bungalows' (wayside rest houses), even this practice was stopped. Surprisingly, Nehru never felt that the magnificent Raj Bhavans ill suited a country where more than half of the population lived with practically no roof above their head!

If the leaders were not to set an example of simple living, how could they ask the people to make sacrifices for economic progress? A credibility gap had thus grown because of the gulf

between what they said and what they practised. Mahatma Gandhi had seen this and had called for a change of heart, but alas this did not take place.

Transformation by spiritual means aimed at rebuilding the individual, making him adhere to the right means to achieve the right ends—this indeed was a difficult job.

But there was another way of transforming society, the way of the Soviet Union and China; the people could be forced almost to a static living standard so that funds were made available to build factories, farms and so on. Human values had to be sacrificed for material gains.

Nehru found this repugnant and charted another course, keeping in view the moral and spiritual aspects of Indian life. He opted for planned development through a series of Five-Year Plans, but not at human and social cost. He wanted a synthesis of the scientific and technological civilization of the modern world with India's contemplative spirit.

For building the country, he, a Fabian from the days he studied law in London, preferred socialistic ways. His type of socialism, he explained in a preface he himself wrote to the Third Five-Year Plan document—what officials had earlier drafted was heavy and uninspiring—was intended to 'secure rapid economic growth and expansion of employment, reduction of disparities in income and wealth and prevention of concentration of economic power'. But he emphasized that a basic premise was 'democracy and public participation'.

Mahatma Gandhi had once said: 'A real social order cannot be forced; that would be a remedy worse than the disease.' Similarly, Nehru wanted socialism through non-violent means, through laws passed by an elected Parliament. No doubt his thoughts were influenced by Marx and he admired the Soviet objective, even though imperfectly realized, of giving 'real freedom' to the masses in economic matters. But, as he wrote in his autobiography, he abhorred 'the ruthless suppression of all contrary opinion, the wholesale regimentation, the unnecessary violence'.

He once said in his fortnightly letter to the Chief Ministers: 'At all times there should be due stress on the moral, human and spiritual values which give meaning to economic progress.' His was socialism without tears.

Nehru was conscious of difficulties: harnessing the people's response through democratic means, implementing schemes without discipline or whip or, in the phrase of the Swedish political economist, Gunnar Myrdal, exercising hard options within the framework of a 'Soft State'. But he was confident that the excitement to change the face of India would involve any man who had the vision of freedom.

Then Nehru was also sure of his people's love as was evident from his testament in which he said: 'Many have been admired, some have been revered but the affection of all classes of the Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it.' Lenin had to change the people when he transformed Czar's Russia into a Socialistic State; Nehru thought he has the people behind him and imagined that his task would be easier.

Thus India embarked on its journey to development. It was indeed a matter of faith for a country where the majority of the population endured what Mahatma Gandhi called 'an eternal compulsory fast', where 2.2 per cent of the world's land area (1,138,000 square miles) supported more than 14 per cent of the world's population (one child is born every second), where 560,000 villages had only a few all-weather roads, where only one city in four had a drinking water supply system, where only one adult in seven could read and write, where many people ate less than half of what their bodies required, and where, in the words of India's Nobel Prize winning Bengali poet, Rabindra Nath Tagore, a few 'educated' lived in the upper storey of a house and the vast illiterate millions below—with no staircase in between.

The partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan had deprived India of one-half of well-irrigated land (yielding two million tons of food a year) and accentuated the problem. Eight million refugees from Pakistan stretched India's limited resources still further.

India started the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) from, to use Nehru's words, the 'cowdung stage' (cowdung is burnt as fuel in many villages in India). It was easy going because the Government grouped together all developmental work in progress at that time and called it a plan. The monsoon, which still deter-

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mines India's food prospects, was good; the Korean war helped exports and the rate of growth thus exceeded 7 per cent.

So encouraging was this that the outlay for the Second Plan (1956-61) was doubled from Rs 1,960 crores* (£ 1,089 million) to Rs. 4,672 crores (£ 2,595 million). Gulzarilal Nanda, who later became Deputy Chairman of the Indian Planning Commission, objected to the big size of the Plan. But he was overruled on the plea that India's needs were so large that even the enlarged Plan fell short of needs. True, but what about resources?

The emphasis in the Second Plan was to build basic industries to ensure self-reliance and accelerate future growth. Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to industrialization. According to him, a society consisting of a high proportion of unemployed and underemployed, leavened by a few persons relying increasingly on the use of machinery, was no solution for India's problems.

His criticism was that 'industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or actual exploitation of the villages, as the problems of competition and marketing came in'. He had suggested that the village be made self-contained; he, in fact, warned that if the village perished, India would perish.

But Nehru's thesis was that 'no country today is really independent or capable of resisting aggression unless it is industrially developed'. He wanted to attract the people from villages (millions were landless) to cities so that they would be less dependent on land, less dependent on the whims of the weather. To him, industry provided a more solid base. Therefore, the Second Plan concentrated on building industry.

Some criticized this approach on the argument that 80 per cent of Indians depended on agriculture; they favoured giving it priority for developing the country. When this matter came up before the Planning Commission over which the Prime Minister presided as Chairman, Nehru said: 'If we must have railways, bridges, transport facilities, etc. we must either produce them ourselves or depend on others.' Most critics were silenced even if not convinced.

Since industry was considered the sine qua non for development, Nehru thought of controlling its growth to fit into the

*One crore is equivalent to ten million.

socialistic pattern. He himself drafted the Industrial Policy Resolution (1956), a little more to the left of the earlier one adopted in 1948. The purpose, as he explained at that time to perturbed industrialists, was not to allow 'concentration of economic power' and 'monopolistic tendencies', but to allow the private sector to continue to play its 'due' role. This was more or less a mixed economy.

The Resolution, given a sharper edge in 1970 to discourage further growth of industrial houses with assets of Rs 20 crores (£ 11 million approx.) or more, still holds good. Industries are divided into three categories. The first one includes basic industries like iron and steel, coal, oil and power as well as others like aircraft, shipbuilding, heavy engineering, atomic energy and so on. In this area, the State takes exclusive responsibility for new units.

The second is a mixed group, embracing industries like machine tools, essential durgs, aluminium, basic chemicals and sea and road transport; the State is to take the initiative in establishing new undertakings and private enterprise is to supplement the Government effort. The third category includes other industries where the private sector is free to develop.

The industry-based Second Plan started well but it soon ran into trouble. This was bound to happen because industry required a long gestation period; there was bound to be a time lag between investment and results. At the same time, there had to be free inflow of foreign aid. Capital ran short. The mood of donor countries changed. The monsoon (rainy season) also played false and affected the food supply.

In the beginning of 1960, the Plan had to be reduced to concentrate on the 'core'—irrigation and power projects, essential railway schemes and, of course, new basic industries. At that time India was in the midst of setting up three steel plants* at Rourkela (Orissa), Bhilai (Madhya Pradesh) and Durgapur (West Bengal) with the assistance of West Germany, Russia and the U.K. respectively.

Also in hand was a Soviet-aided heavy engineering plant at

*At a later stage, the United States kept out after evincing some interest in the setting up of a showpiece steel plant at Bokaro (Bihar) because India refused permission for a private sector venture. New Delhi turned once again to Moscow which agreed to oblige.

Ranchi (the Western experts concede that it is the biggest in the East) to build steel plant equipment and other machinery. But these 'core' projects cut deeply into India's foreign exchange reserves; the accumulation of the war years was soon run down.

The West, which had watched India's progress with paternal indulgence because a poor country was trying to make good through peaceful means, came to help. The argument often employed was that democratic India must succeed against Communist China; otherwise democracy would lose the race against Communism in India, jeopardizing the future of entire South East Asia which was watching with interest the outcome in both China and India.

It was admitted that if the choice for a poor peasant in India was between bread and the ballot box, he would prefer the former because he was hungry. But if reasonable progress was ensured, probably he would develop a vested interest in orderly and constitutional growth.

The World Bank, the United States and other Western countries came to India's rescue to alleviate the foreign exchange crisis. The U.S. Senate accepted the Cooper-Kennedy resolution that the American Administration 'invite other friendly and democratic nations to join in a mission to consult with India on joint action to assure fulfilment of India's Second Five Year Plan and the effective design of its Third Plan'.

This (1958) was the beginning of the formation of the 14-nation Aid India Club which has given New Delhi from its inception Rs 11,836 crores (\$ 6.6 billion). To India's good luck there were not many claimants for the aid givers' attention at that time; most countries in Africa and Asia were still under foreign domination.

Washington also gave two million tons of P.L. 480 American food in 1958, four million tons in 1963, six million tons in 1965, and seven million tons in 1966. The average during the sixties came to more than three million tons per year. (It is estimated that P.L. 480 deposits* in local currency total approximately

*Under the terms of the P.L. 480 Agreement, the Government of India deposits in the U.S. Government's account with the Reserve Bank of India rupees equivalent to the dollars paid to U.S. suppliers of agricultural commodities.

Rs 2,550 crores or £ 1.45 billion.) America's contribution to the Aid India Club was about Rs 37.5 crores (£ 21 million) per year in the early sixties; later it decreased to nearly half.

But India's relationship with the West soon came under strain. Various things contributed to this. The U.S. Administration did not like Krishna Menon, then Defence Minister, and Kennedy mentioned this to Nehru when he was in Washington in November 1961.

Mrs Gandhi, who accompanied Nehru on the U.S. trip, praised Krishna Menon at a dinner. And when Menon continued to occupy the pre-eminent position of Defense Minister, the State Department was annoyed.

Kennedy had always evinced a keen interest in India. In his inaugural speech, he praised Nehru's 'soaring idealism'. In fact, soon after Nehru's arrival in Washington in 1961, Kennedy arranged for an exclusive meeting with him on the Presidential yacht. B. K. Nehru, then Indian Ambassador to the US, and Galbraith, then America's Ambassador to India, were also present. Kennedy asked Nehru again and again about India's needs and its plans. Nehru was unusually reticent; in fact, B. K. Nehru had to keep the conversation going. Kennedy was disappointed.

Later B. K. Nehru tried to retrieve the situation by inviting the members of Kennedy's Brains Trust—Walt W. Rostow, Gen Maxwell Taylor, Arthur N. Schlesinger Jr., McGeorge Bundy, Walter W. Heller, Jerome B. Wiesner and a few others—to a post-breakfast meeting. It was such a top-notch gathering that McNamara remarked to B. K. Nehru that even the President of the United States rarely got all of them together at one place.

First Nehru came 20 minutes late and then he just slumped into a chair. The first question asked was. 'Mr Prime Minister, what do you think is the role of an Indian intellectual?' Nehru's reply was a rigmarole and made no point. There were two more questions, but the replies to them were also as long-winded as to the first one.

The meeting, scheduled for an hour, ended in 40 minutes, including the 20 minutes lost by the late arrival of Nehru. All persons present reported to Kennedy individually about the dis-

appointing meeting they had had with Nehru. Their impression was that Nehru had grown old and tired.

Later, Kennedy remarked that Nehru was a person who, like Abraham Lincoln, had stayed around too long and was declining bit by bit. The U.S. Administration then gave up hope that India would play any important role even in South-East Asia, much less in the world.

New Delhi's 'police action' in Goa, a Portuguese colony on the Indian West Coast, annoyed Kennedy further. American economic assistance continued but on a lesser scale.

Britain's unhappiness was apparent when after New Delhi's constitution of a Commission in 1956 to tap oil* and gas reserves in India, Lord Mountbatten wrote to Nehru advising that India should conserve its limited capital and leave the wild-goose chase to Western oil companies. But Lord Mountbatten was proved wrong. Keshav Dev Malaviya, a pro-Communist Minister in charge of oil those days, succeeded in vindicating Indian policy when a large quantity of oil was found with the help of Soviet experts, and of an Indo-British joint venture.

In more than one way that was a watershed in New Delhi's reliance on Western know-how. Nehru and many others began nurturing the suspicion that the West did not want to share all its knowledge with India. These fears were strengthened when Indian technicians trained in the Soviet Union said that they were 'shown everything and given all opportunities to learn the requisite skills while those sent to the US were barred from working on the shop floor because of union rules.'

The Western countries were also worried over Nehru's over-emphasis on industry. It was apparent that Nehru was in a hurry to industrialize India, and he was willing even to forego necessary investment on defence.

Mrs Gandhi reportedly remarked after the Chinese attack on India that she and her father had found signs of Chinese aggressiveness even when they visited Peking in 1954. But the choice, as she explained to me when she was Information Minis-

*'Mineral Oils' was an item listed under the Public Sector in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 but the Government allowed Standard Vacuum, Burmah Shell and Caltex to set up their refineries during 1951-3.

†See Chapter 3 for details.

ter in Shastri's Cabinet, was between postponing economic development which Nehru thought was the immediate need and stepping up expenditure on defence which he believed could wait for some time more. (The establishment of basic industries did, however, come in handy when India fought a war* against Pakistan in September 1965. The Western countries stopped all aid and equipment but the industrial base created by Nehru helped India tide over the crisis to a large extent.)

The stress on industrialization in the Second Plan (1956 to 1961) doubled steel production (1.7 million tons to 3.5 million tons); nearly trebled aluminium production (7.3 thousand tons to 18.5 thousand tons) and more than quadrupled machine tools. Petroleum products went up from zero to 5.7 million tons in a decade and overall industrial production rose during this period by 94 per cent.

It was not sufficiently foreseen that development through heavy industry would only whip up the demand for agricultural products and consumer goods. Targets for foodgrains, cotton, jute, sugarcane, oilseeds and other commodities were revised in the midst of the Second Plan but it was too late. The performance in the agricultural field was already inadequate; pushing up targets only meant making progress on paper.

Increased expenditure on industrialization forced the Government to resort heavily to deficit financing, Rs 938 crores (£ 5.2 million) were added to annual budgets in the Second Plan by printing notes. The result was that prices went up, a greater number of buyers were now competing among themselves to purchase commodities because the production did not increase proportionately. Also, those who earlier stood outside the market, or those who could buy only a few things, were now in a position to afford more because more and more money was reaching their hands.

When Shastri took over as Prime Minister (9 June 1964) his first official pronouncement was that he would try to reduce prices. All commodities were costing about a sixth more than three years before. Food prices, an item accounting for two-thirds of the family expenditure of some 70 per cent of the Indian po-

*See Chapter 3 for details.

pulation, had gone up by about 35 per cent. He asked L. K. Jha, then Secretary to the Prime Minister, to devise ways to bring prices down. Scheme after scheme was prepared in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, and reams of paper were used. There were dozens of meetings among officials. The end product was nil. Food prices went up by another 18 per cent in one year of Shastri's regime.

Even though the Third Plan* (1961-66) was technically half way through when Shastri came in, he was more in favour of 'consolidating the gains' of the first two plans and shifting emphasis to short-maturing and quick-yielding projects. And he asked the Planning Commission to change priorities.

Shastri saw that agriculture was the key to India's problems—a physiocratic doctrine. Therefore, the Plan was reoriented in favour of agriculture. And in any case the plan and other things had to be revised because the Chinese aggression in 1962 had put India's development out of gear; now defence expenditure had the first claim on revenue.

No doubt, India decided to follow the policy of 'defence with development'. But this required discipline and sacrifice, if it was not to be an empty slogan. The emotional upsurge witnessed during the Chinese hostilities had conveyed a wrong impression of the people's capacity to bear with difficulties. The spurt in production—and hard work—lasted as long as the fighting continued. The nation quickly returned to the same old slow, phlegmatic pace, to the same internal squabbles.

The spark of sympathy which the Chinese attack had ignited in the heart of Western nations had built up hopes of massive aid. But as soon as the guns were silent on the border the last post of democracy in Asia was practically left to fend for itself. So much so that one of the armament factories promised by the US and another by Britain remained paper schemes.

The defeat of India at the hands of China damaged its image. Now the romantic notion of the Western countries that a de-

*It was often amusing to watch the discussions on the Third Plan because V.K.R.V. Rao and Trilok Singh, then both members of the Commission, were always at loggerheads and they would fight like children, each trying to impress the gathering by reeling out outdated theories and unintelligible data.

mocratic India would one day excel Communist China began to fade out. New Delhi's non-alignment, which the West saw often tilting towards the Soviet Union, loomed larger than before. The old dictum that aid should 'buy' friends got fresh vigour.

Despite all efforts India would one day go Communist—this conviction began to grow in Washington and Britain. The West did not write off India but reduced its interest and assistance.

In a country where progress is sought without employing authoritarian methods, foreign aid* plays a major role. And when it is reduced in size the effects on the economy are harsh. This was what happened in India. If not aid, then trade. No doubt, India's trade between 1961 and 1966 went up by 5 per cent a year. But imports were equally heavy—of both raw materials and capital goods. Therefore, the adverse balance rose from Rs 357.5 crores in 1961 to Rs 655 crores (£ 384 million) in 1966.

Foreign countries refused to underwrite the growing gap. The reserves which India had accumulated in Britain for services rendered during World War II went down from Rs 1,620 crores (£ 900 million) in 1950 to Rs 392.4 crores (£ 218 million) in 1966.

Had agricultural output gone up, things would have been different but here progress was at first average and then poor. Foodgrains production went up from 70 million tons in 1955-56 to 82 million tons in 1960-61 but then stayed there. The following two years were poor, and production dropped to 80 million tons in 1963-64.

Favourable weather in 1964 helped a bit and increased output to almost 90 million tons. But the crops again failed in subsequent years. (A Ford Foundation experts' team had predicted a serious food crisis in India in the mid-1960s.)

The India-Pakistan war (1965) brought still more expenditure, shortages and difficulties. The Western countries, particularly the US, suspended aid to express their unhappiness over the hostilities. The pinch was felt, and growth of industrial production slowed down to 4.3 per cent in the absence of imported raw

*Aid constituted 5 per cent of the total investment in the First Plan, 19 per cent in the Second, 23 per cent in the Third. In the Fourth, the proportion may be around 17 percent.

material and spare parts as against 8 to 10 per cent in earlier years. In fact, the overall economic growth hovered around 3½ per cent between 1961 and 1968.

Once, the economy went awry, it looked large capacities had been created where they were not wanted and not created where they were required. For example, cement was in plenty while steel and coal lagged behind demand.

This also affected employment (already 15 million were without jobs). Almost four million persons were entering the labour force every year while only 2½ million new jobs were being created, the slowdown in the economy made things still worse. The educated were particularly hit.

For the first time in 1964, a number of mining engineers remained unemployed. A year later, civil engineers were queuing up at employment exchanges. And every year there were many more swelling their ranks. (About one hundred thousand graduate and diploma-level engineers are said to be unemployed at present.)

The Government tried to meet the problem by reducing the number of seats in engineering institutes. What a solution in a country where so much remained to be built!

Where did things go wrong? It was apparent that the planners had indulged in too many optimistic assumptions; they had hoped to build an industrial base for self-sustaining growth but failed to allow for the time it would take under Indian conditions; they took credit for managerial talent which was not there; their hopes of efficient performance in the public sector were belied by bureaucratic control and overstaffing on the shop floor.

In fact, the performance of the public sector was poor, showing a return of not even 2 per cent on an investment which in 1970 stood at Rs. 3,800 crores (£ 2.1 billion). The Government undertakings were supposed to earn enough money to sustain their own expansion, as well as to make a contribution to other public activity. But their teething troubles have lasted too long.

Their failure naturally upset all plans and threw an additional burden on the public exchequer. The Government was forced to levy more taxes not only to feed these 'white elephants' but also to raise money to create the jobs which the profits from the public sector projects should have financed.

It was true that profit was not the primary objective of public sector undertakings. They were meant to open up fields which entailed risks and required huge outlays or to make good shortages in crucial areas, or to encourage development along socialist lines. But, at the same time, they were not established to be the hotbeds of intrigue, inefficiency and waste that they turned out to be.

In fact, their performance shook the people's faith in socialism. But fear of endangering 'progressive ideas' silenced many critics and, increasingly, demands that the public undertakings should improve their working began to be described as 'propaganda by reactionaries and vested interests'.

In this atmosphere, the bureaucracy dumped more and more surplus, inefficient and retired or retiring officers into the public sector; jobs in Government undertakings came to serve as waiting rooms for officials whose turn for promotion to higher jobs was yet to come. So crippling was this practice that the Administrative Reforms Commission (1966) advised the Government against it.

Paradoxical as it might appear, the public sector undertakings suffered most at the hands of trade unions which are supposed to be committed to public ownership or socialism. *Lokudayog*, a Government publication on public enterprise, said in an editorial (July 1970) that 'irresponsible demands galore and endless inter-union rivalries have been the bane of quite a few public sector enterprises—some of the largest in the public sector'.

In 1970 troubles in the Government-owned Durgapur steel plant were so persistent (production fell to 60,000 tons from 120,000 tons a month) that the Centre seriously considered whether it should declare a lockout.

Since criticism of labour was considered anti-progressive, the ruling Congress party members felt reluctant to say anything even behind closed doors. The four main trade unions—the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) of the Right Communists; the Centre of Industrial Trade Union of the Left Communists; the All India National Trade Union Congress (AINTUC) of the Congress party and the Hind Mazdoor of the Praja Socialist and Samyukta Socialist Parties—talked only about the rights

of labour and not about their obligations. The classification of industrial disputes in 1968 (the latest year for which statistics are available) shows that while mines topped the list in man-days lost, major ports (all in the public sector) came second. Regionally, West Bengal headed the list, followed by Mysore and Maharashtra.

In fact, the Government was reluctant to lay down a labour policy after the nationalization of banks. The Fourth Plan draft contained a chapter on Employment and Labour which was deleted from the final document lest the stand taken should look less 'radical' than the nation's mood at that time.

Much later, Mrs Gandhi wrote a preface to the Fourth Plan—just as her father had done to the Third—and exhorted labour to work hard.

Even then it was only an appeal. When it came to facing labour's demands, Mrs Gandhi was too much of a politician and too little of an economist. When workers of the State-owned Life Insurance Corporation were on the war path her instruction through a noting in a file was that a 'settlement' should be found—the reason plainly being that the LIC union were backed by the Communists, who were helping Mrs Gandhi in Parliament to stay in power. The settlement gave labour more than twice the amount they had expected to get.

Again, Mrs Gandhi conceded as interim relief for Government servants Rs 106 crores (£ 60 million), in October 1970, despite the Planning Commission's complaint that there was no money to finance even the approved projects in the Fourth Plan (1969-74). But what was bad economics was good politics. Mrs Gandhi was able to retain the sympathy of 2½ million Central employees, an articulate section of the electorate.

There was no doubt that the increase in the cost of living had reduced the 'real salary' of white-collar workers but pumping in more money into the economically 'unproductive' bureaucracy was no solution.

But then the Planners were always overlooking productivity; they urged more production from the factory, not from the worker, more output from the farm but not from the farmer. If per capita income was to be increased, it was obvious that every employed person had to increase his productivity. But New Delhi's pen-

chant for physical targets and reluctance to disturb the hornet's nest of organized labour made it difficult to talk of improvement in productivity.

* * *

Not to disturb things and to find an easy way out was the prevalent mood. New Delhi looked for foreign aid. But aid-givers were reluctant to advance more money, at least not until India put its house in order. A US dollar at that time fetched Rs 10 or more in the black-market as against its official rate of Rs 4.75.

The World Bank, New Delhi's major source of foreign loans, recommended that India must correct the undervaluation of both imports and exports since it did not reflect the true value of foreign exchange for the economy. The Bank, which based its advice on the basis of the report of a team it sent to India, also suggested better deployment of domestic resources. Implicit in the suggestion was a free hand for private investors.

The team, headed by Bell, a World Bank official, specifically said that India should concentrate for sometime on consolidating its industrial base, and concentrate funds for the expansion and modernization of the farm sector. And, above all, there was a clear hint that the rupee must be devalued.

India reacted unfavourably to these suggestions, it did not like the idea of concentrating on agriculture because it suggested perpetuating industrial backwardness. Nor could a nation wedded to a socialistic pattern allow a free run to market forces. On the value of the rupee there was marked optimism.

New Delhi tried to retrieve the situation by limiting development spending and by imposing a flat special surcharge of 10 per cent on the already heavily taxed personal incomes. But these did not help. How could they when non-development expenditure was going up by about 20 per cent a year?

Defence expenditure had increased from Rs 315 crores (£ 175 million) in 1961-62 to Rs 885 crores (£ 491 million) following the war against China and by another Rs 60 crores (£ 33 million), a rise of 8 per cent, after the India-Pakistan war. The war against Pakistan itself cost Rs 100 crores (£ 55 million).

After facing two wars, none dared to ask questions about the

advisability of heavy spending on defence. None dares even now lest he should be attacked for lack of patriotism, although many feel that defence expenditure must be pruned to find money for development.

In late 1965, the then Finance Minister, T.T. Krishnamachari, told an urgently convened Cabinet meeting that there was nothing right with the nation's economy—neither production, nor exports nor foreign assistance. But he was dead set against devaluation of the rupee because he feared that by doing so India would increase the price of imports indiscriminately and further accentuate its difficulties.

However, his main objection was to pressure from America. The pound of flesh demanded by Washington was devaluation of the rupee. Until then, it was not willing to enter into new commitments about PL 480 food supplies or aid, or even to look at the Fourth Five-Year Plan which was then on the anvil.

America also saw in the situation an opportunity to insist that India should make greater use of private capital and soften controls to encourage production. A society which was wedded to a socialistic pattern ('post office socialism' as John Kenneth Galbraith calls it) could not follow a *laissez-faire* policy, however slow the pace of development. But persons like Asoka Mehta, then Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, were of the opinion that the first priority was to produce wealth—by any means—and then to distribute it.

This was reminiscent of the remark Pant, then Home Minister, made after one Cabinet meeting in 1959 that the production of wealth was more important than the method of producing it. Krishna Menon, who represented 'progressive forces', replied: 'If you were to do so, capitalist America would control India.' That is more or less the opinion of the present Central Government.

Indeed, Western private capital, particularly American, has always been chary of investing in India; it still is. It is not fears about repatriation of capital or remittance of profits that deters the foreign investor. Nor is it New Delhi's insistence that a majority of the shares of a venture should be with Indians. It is fears over India's political stability and the fear of either a Communist take-over or wholesale nationalization under public pressure that holds the investor back.

These apprehensions have become more pronounced since the nationalization of major banks and the split in the Congress party. And evidence of this was available in 1969 when a top delegation of German bankers and businessmen led by Abs visited India. Its specific purpose was to find fields for large-scale investment but it went back without even considering the prospects seriously. The split in the Congress party had scared the group away, because it added to the feeling of political uncertainty. (During his stay Abs met Morarji Desai secretly.)

Little did the German delegation pay heed to India's needs or to the fact that the day Mrs Gandhi was turned out of the Congress party, all share markets registered an extraordinary buoyancy. When Indian industrialists showed no panic, why should outsiders?

Foreign investors can justifiably find fault with India's cumbersome procedures to process applications, the protracted case-by-case study or even corruption prevalent in the lower ranks of Government departments dealing with licences for foreign collaboration. But these are cited only to cover unwillingness to invest in India.

When the foreign investors operated in monopoly conditions, they were quite happy. In fact, they did every thing to keep Indian firms out of the field in which they were interested. For example, it was alleged by a cooperative society during an inquiry that when it made plans to start manufacturing baby foods, it was told that the society's 'entire production would be thrown into the sea'.

Very many foreign firms preferred to produce high-profit, non-essential items. The Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Report (July 1967) mentioned keen foreign collaboration in room air-conditioners and an equal number in stationery items. Others were in lipstick, ice-cream, frozen food, hair clippers, toys and umbrella ribs.

As regards procedural difficulties, the Indian entrepreneurs themselves go through the same frustrating experience, although things are slightly better since Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who just sat on files, was removed from the Industries Ministry in July 1970.

He was so afraid of annoying 'progressive' opinion that he

would not act. Every decision regarding the Birlas, India's leading industrialists, would be kept in abeyance for weeks together and then referred to the Cabinet for decision because Ahmed did not want to take any risk.

Foreign investors have also talked about the stranglehold of controls. Shastri, taking a leaf out of Mahatma Gandhi's book, would often say that controls were morally wrong. And since his time, some controls have indeed been lifted one by one—from paper, cement, steel, sugar and so on. But the actual effect is marginal, price increases have still to be sanctioned by the Government, and new units now require licences again.

Therefore, when America insisted on devaluation, the hope of attracting new foreign investment was pitched unrealistically high. But India had very little choice; the condition of its economy in 1965 seemed to leave it with no alternative.

Britain promised to back New Delhi's case with the International Monetary Fund for more stand-by credit; a Secretaries' committee of the Government of India suggested keeping the bulk of foreign trade earnings to pay for certain 'must' sectors like defence, food imports, and remittances to deserving students abroad, and leave the rest to fend for themselves.

Probably, political leadership could have used the opportunity to provide the nation with the much-needed ethos for a long effort to achieve self-reliance. Probably the people could have been enthused with the argument that they must tighten their belts further because foreign Powers were wanting to 'debase' their rupee. Probably refusal to devalue the rupee could have strung together the different parts and sections of people to stand united behind the Government as they did against China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965.

But there was no will to resist at the top, no faith among the leaders in themselves or the people. Only T.T. Krishnamachari was stoutly against devaluation. The day he left the Government (31 December 1965), devaluation became a foregone conclusion.

What clinched the issue was a \$ 200 million loan which P.C. Bhattacharjea, then Reserve Bank Governor, told New Delhi he must have to save India's fiscal system from collapse. The World Bank agreed to give the loan if India accepted devaluation.

On receiving a cable from New Delhi in late October 1965, B.K. Nehru broached the question of a loan with the World Bank, which said 'No' on the ground that India had been drawing too many loans. The Bank's Chief, George Woods, expressed his inability to help but hinted that devaluation of the rupee might make the Bank take a generous view. His aide was more blunt; he said that they would not recommend any further loan until the rupee was devalued.

B.K. Nehru communicated the Bank's reply by cable and left for Delhi soon after. The day he reached Delhi, TTK's resignation was announced. According to B.K. Nehru, the major impediment in the way of devaluation was removed.

B.K. Nehru said that the decision to devalue the rupee was taken before Shastri left for Tashkent on 1 January 1966. Asoka Mehta told me the same thing: 'We only implemented the decision that Shastri did not live to implement.'

However, Morarji Desai, with whom I checked subsequently when he was once again the Finance Minister, said there was nothing in his files to indicate that Shastri had taken the decision. Chester Bowles, the US Ambassador those days, also told me before he left India that devaluation was inherent in the situation but Shastri never gave him or Washington the impression that he was willing to devalue the rupee.

Conscious as Shastri was of public opinion, it is very unlikely that he would have gone to the limit of taking an unpopular step like devaluation. He always had his ears to the ground and had never done anything which would evoke unfavourable popular reactions. On devaluation, his attitude may not have been different. This is evident from the fact that he did not devalue the rupee in 1965 even when there were explicit hints from the World Bank and some foreign Governments. In the Cabinet meetings, he mentioned more than once about the 'pressures' to devalue the rupee. He reportedly said: 'I don't like others pressurizing us.'

However, B.K. Nehru told me a different story, he said that the decision to devalue the rupee was taken in December 1965 when Shastri was still alive. According to B.K. Nehru, one day in December 1965 Asoka Mehta, Subramaniam and the then newly appointed Finance Minister, Sachin Chaudhuri, sat he-

hind closed doors, kept officials out and decided on devaluation.

He said that before his departure for Washington—by this time Mrs Gandhi was the Prime Minister in place of Shastri who had died in Tashkent—B. K. Nehru went to Sachin Chaudhuri and asked him what reply he should give to the World Bank. The Minister asked: ‘Don’t you know about it?’

‘What?’

‘We decided to devalue the rupee the other day.’

Chaudhuri handed B.K. Nehru a two-page note, the minutes of that meeting. But the note bore no signature. On B.K. Nehru’s insistence, Chaudhuri signed the papers and communicated to him officially the Government’s decision to devalue the rupee.

B.K. Nehru left for America followed by Bhattacharjea, who gave an undertaking to the World Bank that India would devalue the rupee. On his promise the Bank released a loan of Rs. 150 crore (£8.3 million): it was intended to be the first instalment in a total package of Rs 675 crores (£375 million), but that never materialized. B.K. Nehru told me that the World Bank got off very cheaply. ‘We could have made them agree to finance the whole Fourth Plan by promising devaluation’, he said.

Hardly had a specially deputed finance official from New Delhi, Sunder Rajan, settled the quantum of devaluation at Rs. 7.50 per U.S. dollar when B.K. Nehru received a cable from L.K. Jha that devaluation might not take place.

Mrs Gandhi seemed to have had second thoughts because of Kamaraj’s strong opposition to devalue when he was consulted before the announcement. In fact, that was a watershed in the relationship between him and Mrs Gandhi and if he had had his way, he would have never been a party to making her the Prime Minister again.

B.K. Nehru replied that the Government could not go back on its word. On the basis of Bhattacharjea’s pledge the World Bank had already released Rs 150 crores (£ 8.3 million), how could India break its promise?

Once the decks for devaluation were cleared, Mrs Gandhi flew to America (26 March 1966). She knew that the days of Kennedy, when foreign aid was an integral part of U.S. policy,

had ended with his death; Johnson clearly made aid dependent on performance. New Delhi did not object to the criterion but it happened to be prescribed at a time when its performance was rather bad.

Mrs Gandhi made a good impression in America particularly on Johnson. He was indeed keen to rescue her from her difficulties and told others in his fatherly Texan way that he would see to it that 'no harm comes to this girl'.

The message he sent to the U.S. Congress for 3½ million tons of foodgrains for India was couched in strong emotional terms: 'The facts are simple; their implications grave. India faces unprecedented drought. Unless the world responds, India faces famine.'

Additional U.S. food for India, Rs 675 crores (£ 375 million) in non-project aid, and the World Bank's agreement to consider additional project loans—these were the prizes which Mrs Gandhi was to have earned in exchange for devaluation of the rupee.

The Indian Cabinet was taken into confidence much later, on the day the devaluation was announced: 6 June 1966. Most Ministers did not understand its full implications, nor did they care. Some conscientious objectors were silenced by the argument that U.S. aid of Rs 675 crores (£ 375 million) would be available for spending on a very wide range of maintenance imports.

But the Government appeared to have spent all its energy on the act of devaluation—no follow-up steps had been considered, at least not seriously. Indian exports were primarily of traditional goods like jute, tea and textiles; how would their production go up when the machinery was outmoded and the labour problems persistent? At the same time, the cost of capital goods, spare parts, components and materials from abroad would go up.

As expected there was a spurt in prices; Air India, a public sector undertaking, was the first to react; it increased its fares. This was bound to happen since international fares are, under IATA rules, set in dollars, but the announcement had nevertheless an adverse psychological impact at home. Imported ~~commodities~~ disappeared from the market overnight and there was a ~~sharp~~ shortage of even essential commodities such as ~~potato~~

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The Indian Cabinet was taken into confidence much later, on the day the devaluation was announced: 6 June 1966. Most Ministers did not understand its full implications, nor did they care. Some conscientious objectors were silenced by the argument that U.S. aid of Rs. 675 crores (£ 375 million) would be available for spending on a very wide range of maintenance imports.

But the Government appeared to have spent all its energy on the act of devaluation—no follow-up steps had been considered, at least not seriously. Indian exports were primarily of traditional goods like jute, tea and textiles; how would their production go up when the machinery was outmoded and the labour problems persistent? At the same time, the cost of capital goods, spare parts, components and materials from abroad would go up.

As expected there was a spurt in prices, Air India, a public sector undertaking, was the first to react; it increased its fares. This was bound to happen since international fares are, under IATA rules, set in dollars, but the announcement had nevertheless an adverse psychological impact at home. Imported goods disappeared from the market overnight and there was a sudden shortage of even essential commodities such as kerosene.

The Government talked of punitive action under the Essential Commodities Act; and, as usual, there was the fanfare of publicity about the proposal to set up a chain of co-operative stores (super bazars) and to secure for them consumer goods like soap and toilet articles straight from the factory. The prices of these goods were kept under check for some time by arranging for the liberal import of their ingredients from abroad. But this relief lasted only a short time.

The Indian Mission in Moscow reported that the Soviet Union had not taken kindly to the devaluation of the rupee at the instance of the World Bank. Manubhai Shah, the then Commerce Minister who went to Moscow early in July to fix a new basis for rupee trade contracts, was told by Kosygin that it was a blunder. Asoka Mehta was then sent to explain the decision.

In contracts with the Soviet Union, India's export prices had been quoted in rupees with no provision for automatic revaluation. On the other hand, Soviet export prices were protected by a specific provision covering any change in exchange rates. Shah persuaded the USSR to accept a 47.5 per cent increase in Indian export prices, but only after the matter had been taken up at Kosygin's level.

All political parties were unhappy over devaluation. For once the Communists and the Rightists were on the same side. Rajagopalachari, the Swatantra Party leader, said that it was a result of the Congress party's 'accumulated guilt of 18 years'; the Central Executive of the CPI described the measure as 'the gravest betrayal of national interests by the Government of India at the dictates of U.S. imperialism'. Even Mrs Gandhi's own Congress Parliamentary party, which met three days after the devaluation, expressed its unhappiness over the step.

The tragedy was that the increase in exports that was expected as a result of making Indian goods cheaper in the world markets did not occur. Indeed, according to some officials, with a shortfall in agricultural output and a recession in industry, there was nothing much to export. (In the post-devaluation period, 1966-70, exports had gone up only by 2 per cent per year—far short of the target of 7 per cent.)

Had America and the West given the economic and other assistance that the World Bank had suggested they would, devalua-

tion might have worked better. But the escalation of war in Vietnam diverted Washington's attention, and foreign aid became less and less popular with the Americans. India was almost forgotten. Once the U.S. faltered, other countries backed out.

To India's ill-luck, crops failed in 1967 for the second year in succession. Production was again around 74 million tons, less than even the 1959 figure. Washington was contacted immediately. Even the Soviet Union, which itself was short of food, was persuaded to help.

New Delhi's requirement was so large and so urgent that some food ships on the high seas bound for other countries were diverted to India. New Delhi's missions abroad were asked to secure somehow foodgrains or the like and they went around with the begging bowl.

In New Delhi, Subramaniam, then Food Minister, agreed to constitute a Standing Council of envoys of aid-giving countries for advice on food. The proposal did not mature because of the strong protest voiced by India's own representatives abroad, with B.K. Nehru taking the lead; they considered it needlessly humiliating.

However, the Government can take credit that its desperate steps saved many parts of India, particularly Bihar, from famine. Indeed, it is true that few died of starvation. Twenty-five years earlier, during the British period, almost one million had starved to death in Bengal under similar circumstances.

The drought had a silver lining. The Government was convinced more than ever before that the only way to lessen dependence on the vagaries of the monsoon (rainy season) was to ensure maximum food production in the assured water areas. 'Intensive cultivation' became the slogan.

In the past, expansion of the sown area* was responsible for at least 50 per cent of the increase in food production. Now it was to be through fertilizers, new varieties of seed and other inputs.

*India's total geographical area is about 327 million hectares (808 million acres of 1.26 million square miles). The net area annually under crop is 138 million hectares, of which about 20 million hectares grow two or more crops.

In 1965, when Shastri had changed the emphasis from industry to agriculture, a new strategy had been worked out: (1) the supply of new seed varieties, fertilizer, insecticides and other inputs to 32.5 million acres with an assured water supply, and (2) incentive prices to producers. Now there was an all-out effort to put this into practice.

It was also decided to allow joint stock companies to enter the agriculture field; one firm in New Delhi was even given a licence. Industrial concerns were also allowed to set up seed farms. The Birlas, a leading business house, set up a seed farm in Punjab. (When the Government came under criticism by radicals, the firm was persuaded to return the licence; later the Birlas were asked to quit the seed farm.)

The emphasis on inputs—in 1970 nearly 20 per cent of India's foreign exchange was used on fertilizers as against 4 per cent from 1961 to 1966—increased food production. And a major transformation took place with the introduction of large-yielding plant varieties like 'dwarf' Mexican wheat, hybridization techniques for cane and millets, multiple cropping techniques developed by institutions in India and Government incentives. Together they brought about what is known as the 'Green Revolution'.

The revolution* is primarily confined to wheat—it has still to make its impact on rice, staple food of two-thirds of the population—but food production has on the whole gone up. In 1968, it was 95.6 million tons, or five million tons above the previous peak in 1965. In 1970-71, it is over 100 million tons, and is expected to reach 150 million tons by 1975.

Of all the States, Punjab has contributed the most by covering 80 per cent of its land with 'miracle' wheat varieties, by increasing the number of tubewells 20 times, by tripling the consumption of fertilizers and by introducing machinery to till and plough. (In one city of Punjab, the waiting list for tractors on 31 March 1970 was so long that it was estimated that at the present rate of supply the last man on it would get his tractor after three years.)

*A Ford Foundation expert in New Delhi told me that it was neither "green" nor a "revolution"; all that had happened was that the wheat production had suddenly shot up since 1965 while rice had registered a steady increase in the last 15 years.

Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have also recorded a high rate of growth, an average of 3 to 4 per cent per year against India's average of 1.77 per cent during the sixties.

Just as inputs and 'wonder' seeds have pushed up production, so has the price at which the Government has assured farmers it would buy from them. But this has had the effect of keeping the price up even in bumper years (as in 1968 to 70). In India, where food claims the bulk of an average family's earnings, its cost determines the price index.

It is not that the Central Government has not thought of reducing the guaranteed price. The Agricultural Prices Commission, constituted to recommend prices, has suggested a cut in the maximum price more than once. But New Delhi has not acted on it for several reasons.

One, it is genuinely afraid that farmers might switch over to cash crops like sugarcane from wheat, causing a food problem again. Two, and this is a far weightier consideration, the Central Government does not want to do anything that would displease rural voters who form three-fourths of the Indian electorate of more than 200 million. In fact, through the panchayats (elected village councils) and *jat baradari* (agricultural caste) villages have come to form 'vote banks' and exert pressure.

The pressure of the rural vote has worked relentlessly. For example, when the Food Ministry formulated its 1967-68 policy, the Central Government suggested to the States that a levy on producers would have to be 'an important feature of any scheme of procurement'. They were asked to link procurement with supply of agricultural inputs so as to mop up additional production resulting from the adoption of the high-yielding varieties. But opposition to this was so vociferous in the countryside that it had to be abandoned.

Later, it had to be left to the States to decide how they procured food. The Centre has come to realize its helplessness and has decided to confine itself to 'advising and assisting' and to 'exercising pressure' (whatever that means) to ensure procurement targets.

In the later half of the sixties, the Central Government was anxious to have a national food policy because some States with better rainfall or irrigation facilities produced more food than

the dry areas and States which had switched over to cash crops in a big way. But the surplus States successfully stalled the proposal because Mrs. Gandhi's main support came from them. In fact, the quarrel between the rich and poor states is bound to become more intense as the days go by because of disparity in development.

During the drought years, 1966-67, the State Government of Andhra is thought to have connived at smuggling rice for selling at high prices in the neighbouring deficit States. But the State Chief Minister, Brahmananda Reddy, was not touched as he was a henchman of Mrs Gandhi, his critics claimed.

When the Centre in 1968 wanted to abolish State food zones which had been created during the days of scarcity to club poor States with the rich, it could not succeed because the surplus States wanted to make money from their larger produce.

New Delhi therefore came to the inevitable conclusion that the only way to guard against future shortages was to build a buffer stock of two to three million tonnes. But when the Food Ministry's officials toured the country, the Centre's disillusionment was real. Most States were unwilling to discharge fully the obligations implicit in a single State zonal pattern. Not all of them accepted the targets of procurement, particularly contributions to the Central pool. And many demanded high procurement prices.

What could the deficit States do? One of them, Kerala, ruled by a United Front headed by Communists, officially asked the Centre for permission to import food with the foreign exchange that the State's cashewnut and coir earned abroad. Subsequently, West Bengal, another State with a similar United Front Government, joined Kerala in charging the Centre with political bias in allocating food supplies, and threatened to mobilize the people of the State against the Centre.

Even industrially advanced States under Congress party Governments felt annoyed : 'Why should I produce cloth for Punjab and Andhra Pradesh when they are not wanting to part with their foodgrains?' asked Naik, the Maharashtra Chief Minister, at one meeting of the National Development Council, a forum at which the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers discuss the

country's economic problems and review the working of the Plan.

But what about the States which had neither industry nor agriculture? They pressed for 'industrial dispersal' and used all their political force to make the Centre to agree to sites in their areas for big public undertakings. The Assam Government organized an agitation to get an oil refinery and finally succeeded, even though experts had said that it was not economical to locate it in that State.

The same considerations prevailed in deciding project after project, shipyards, steel mills and the like. The pressure of the States increased in the post-1967 period following the emergence of non-Congress Governments and the resultant weakening of the Congress-run Centre's political authority.

In this scramble, the agricultural States like Punjab did not fare so badly because small-scale industries began coming up in the wake of increased farm products. But U.P., Rajasthan and Bihar suffered the most because their progress, whether in industry or agriculture, was poor.

Instead of blaming themselves, they picked on TTK, a South Indian, who once held the portfolio of Commerce and then Finance. According to them, he had denied them their share because he was 'anti-North'. U.P. complained that it was paying a high price for the honour of having provided all three Prime Ministers since independence. None had wanted to be called partial, and so had erred (it was argued) on the other side and kept the State backward.

To some extent, the underdeveloped States were handicapped by the lack of natural resources.* To some extent, some of them did not have enough dynamism. (Orissa and Bihar have the richest concentration of mineral resources in Asia but are economically backward.) And, to some extent, the Centre was to blame for not securing a national consensus on industrial and other development policies.

On paper the National Development Council ensures consul-

*The iron ore reserves in India, 21,000 million tons, are one-fourth of the total world reserves. In manganese deposits, India ranks third, coal is estimated at 60,000 million tons. Studies of river basins indicate a power potential of 40 million kw.

tation at the top level—between the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers—but for the States it provides only Hobson's choice. For example, all Five-Year Plans are based on the Planning Commission's studies geared to a 15-year perspective. But the perspective document has never been discussed in the Council. Even the printed document, 'Notes on Perspective Development' up to 1975-76 only speak of alternatives and dismiss them in four pages.

Again the Constitution framers have been also partial to the Centre by allocating to it all major sources of revenue (income-tax, corporation tax, union excise, to name a few). There is provision (Article 275) for the devolution of resources from the Centre to the States, and for a periodic review of devolution arrangements by a Finance Commission.

But New Delhi has been overworking its power (under Article 282) to give grants. Out of the total revenues of the States Rs. 7,314 crores (£ 4,060 million) in the Third Plan—devolution was only 4.9 per cent while grants-in-aid were 13 per cent.

Limited assistance by the Centre and increasing pressure from legislature members to spend on projects in their constituencies even if they are uneconomical have forced the States to overdraw from the Reserve Bank. Central loans to the States increased from Rs. 1,052 crores (£ 584 million) in 1961 to Rs. 2,078 crores (£ 1154.4 million) in 1968; the total at the end of 1970 was about Rs 3,000 crores (£ 1666.6 million).

The pressure of legislators has not only worsened the States' debts through unproductive expenditure but has made introduction of land reforms difficult. In India the zamindar (landlord) is still the master of all he surveys, though he has been stripped of his feudal rights. His position and money enable him to control votes in his village and he supports only a like-minded candidate who when elected to the State Assembly will put his weight against any drastic legislation on land reform.

The result is that one-fourth of the rural population owns no land (103 million out of a total rural population of 434 million). Another 185 million possess less than five acres per family. A 1958 study by World Bank experts on the progress of land reforms reveals that there has been some reduction in the un-

evenness of distribution but the overall picture has not changed to any appreciable extent.

Through the slogan of zamiodari abolition, the national movement spread to the countryside and it was but natural that the Government should have reorganized relations between the owners of land and its times. The initial call was for abolition of intermediaries and almost all States have done so. Nearly 20 million tenants now deal directly with the Government.

But implementation of reforms outlined since 1961, the beginning of the Third Plan, has been uneven. The aims were removal of 'such impediments to increased agricultural production as arose in the agrarian structure inherited from the past' and elimination of 'all elements of exploitation and social injustice within the agrarian system'. But these mean different things to different people. And the influence of the landed aristocracy on politics has slowed down progress in this field.

There is no law to force the owner to till the land: in certain cases cultivators given ownership of land have themselves become absentee landlords. Security of tenure and regulation of rent are far from being ensured. In most States there are official registers to record the names of tenants, but these are largely incomplete. Some lands which should vest in the State and could be given to the landless are still with the zamindars, who through political pressure manage to hang on to their holdings, evading legal obligations.

A ceiling on agricultural land holdings—generally 30 acres per person—was decided upon in the early fifties. But landowners have employed devious methods to escape the law, often they have shown on paper transfer of the excess land to their children or even to fictitious persons and thus retained control.

For example, a preliminary survey of land possessions in Madhya Pradesh showed that the State Ministers held land up to 700 acres. The average holding was between 150 and 250 acres.

In the absence of effective land reforms, gains from high-yield farming have gone mostly to zamindars or to big peasant proprietors. Even the benefits of technology have not generally reached small farmers and wage earners. Therefore, economic inequalities have become sharper, giving rise to tensions.

To lessen tension, Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Mahatma

Gandhi, initiated a Bhoodan* (gifting of land) movement. But like any other appeal to the heart this has met with very little success; and the bulk of land he has received is barren or under dispute.

The failure of the Bhoodan movement only made the slogan of *Inquilab Zindabad* (Long Live Revolution) more full-throated. And off and on, agrarian tensions have erupted into violence.

In West Bengal in 1967 the extremists started a violent movement at Naxalbari, near the Sino-Indian border, to capture land by driving out the owners. The Naxalites† as they are called are Maoists and they have parted company with the Marxists, the Left Communists of India.

A study of the Indian Home Ministry (1969) has revealed that 'the persistence of serious social and economic inequalities in the rural areas has given rise to tensions between different classes'. The Ministry says that 'generally speaking, agitations have been launched on issues of distribution of land to the landless workers and increase of agricultural wages. So far there have not been many sustained agitations on behalf of the share-croppers and the sub-tenants, and agitations have already taken place in West Bengal'.

The study's conclusions are:

Certain political parties have succeeded in organizing effectively landless workers, poor peasants and others with insecure tenancies in some pockets.

The agitations for the distribution of land to the landless have elicited the maximum response; they have also had a wide geographical spread.

The tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar are in a state of ferment. In the Srikakulam area in Andhra Pradesh, the movement of the Girjans or hill people (led by

*Once, at a closed door meeting on Bhocdan in Bihar, the Government was criticized for not implementing land reforms honestly. Nehru, who was present at the meeting, was openly chastized by a woman Bhoodan worker for not being able to check corruption and nepotism. Nehru lost his temper and hit back by saying that he knew how Bhoodan workers thrived on the money they received from 'vested interests'.

†For details see Chapter 4.

Naxalites) against the landlords has acquired the characteristics of a well-directed campaign. (Since the report was written, the campaign has fizzled out)

Although the peasant political organizations in most parts of the country are still organizationally weak, and their capacity for launching sustained agitations is limited, the tensions in the rural areas, resulting from the widening gap between the relatively few affluent farmers and the large body of small land holders, landless agricultural workers, may increase in the coming months and years. A bad agricultural season could lead to an explosive situation in the rural areas.

* * *

To 'lessen tensions' in rural areas, there was a 'Land Grab Movement' in July 1970, organized separately by the CPI, the SSP and the PSP. The movement, though opposed by the Marxists as anti-revolutionary, gained some momentum and there was symbolic 'occupation' of land in Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Rajasthan, U.P. and West Bengal. But the movement was aimed more at hitting the headlines than capturing land.

In the process, embarrassment was faced by Mrs Gandhi, who possesses a 4-acre plot near Delhi, Chavan, whose wife has a big plot of agricultural land in Maharashtra, and Jagjivan Ram, who has a farm in Bihar. Their land was first threatened or 'grabbed' and later vacated—it was a demonstration to show that even those who talked so much of giving 'land to the tiller' did not mean it when it was their own land that was to be given away.

However, one result of the abortive movement was that the Central Government convened an urgent meeting of the State Chief Ministers (27 September 1970) to consider land reforms.

At the very outset, Mrs Gandhi suggested taking the family as the unit instead of the individual for the purposes of ceiling legislation so as to have more land for redistribution but the Chief Ministers rejected the proposal unanimously, with Brahmappa Reddy, Naik and Sukhadia (among the staunchest supporters of Mrs Gandhi since the Congress party's split) spearheading the opposition.

Reddy said that by lowering the ceiling, farmers would be denied an adequate standard of living. Naik questioned the very propriety of putting a ceiling on holdings in the rural sector when there was no such ceiling in the urban sector.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Food and Agriculture Minister since the Cabinet reshuffle in July 1970, had earlier in the day earned Mrs Gandhi's wrath by saying that 'steady progress' had been maintained regarding land reforms. He now changed his stance and said: 'The Chief Ministers must keep in mind that the forces of violence are gaining strength.'

Naik retorted: 'Don't you get bamboozled by irresponsible agitators. Owning land is neither unethical nor unsocial.' Sukhadia raised his voice to maintain that 'it is not desirable to change land laws enacted with great difficulty. This would only create fears in the minds of farmers'.

And thus another important conference on land reforms, the twentieth since independence, came to an end. Finding solid opposition, the Centre hurriedly announced a committee to consider the 'problem in detail'. This had been the pattern in the past also, but without any substantial outcome.

There was a time when the Congress party was one, and held power in all the States and at the Centre. That was when even the most radical land reform measures would have been possible. But then the Government opted for 'gradual progress' in the 'right direction'.

The delay was used by the landed aristocracy to build up its lobby at the Centre; the Congress party's top leaders and the Union Cabinet Ministers stalled land reforms to bargain for political support in the States. This quid pro quo arrangement became more open during Shastri's time and more effective during Mrs Gandhi's.

With the levers of power operating from the countryside the Government has been loading burdens on urban areas. The land tax averaged 4 per cent on agricultural output in 1938-39 but is down to about 1 per cent now.

Income tax has been increasing gradually, year by year, and that has served either as a disincentive or has encouraged transactions under the table. (There are officially 30,000 in-

come tax* assessees earning over Rs. 40,000, about £2,222 per year.)

In place of land reforms, there is a movement to impose ceiling on urban property—Rs 5 lakhs (£ 27,777). Since land, which includes urban property, is a State subject under the Constitution, the States, controlled by the rural vote, have vied with one another to support the urban land ceiling to parade their radicalism. In the process they have pigeon-holed land reforms.

Through the Government's own actions and the pronouncements of its leaders, the impression has also gained ground that private industry, particularly large scale, is not welcome. There has always been suspicion against big business.

As back as 1960, Nehru had said at a meeting: "Where had the 42 per cent increase in national income between 1950 and 1960 gone?" He said he saw villagers better fed, better clothed and better sheltered but he also saw some sections as poor as they were ever before.

Consequently, the Planning Commission constituted on 13 October 1960 a committee under one of its members, P. C. Mahalanobis, known for his Leftist views, to find out where the gains of the first two Plans had gone and to ascertain the extent to which wealth and means of production had tended to concentrate. Before this committee submitted its final report in 1969, three more agencies were set up with more or less the same terms of reference. They were the Monopolies Commission (1964); the study commissioned from R K Hazari, now Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank (1966), and the Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Committee (1967).

Not that big business had not benefited from economic development. The Mahalanobis Committee showed that companies having a paid-up capital of Rs 50 lakhs (£ 270,000) and above constituted only 1.6 per cent of the total number of companies but accounted for 53 per cent of the total paid-up capital.

Hazari said in his report that the controlling families in most cases made some relatively small investments in a principal company or companies which initiate a breeding process—

*Above an income of Rs 2 lakhs (£ 11,111) per annum, an individual has to pay about 90 per cent of his earning as income tax.

in some groups an unbreeding process—that takes care of nearly all subsequent controlling investments of significance, without calling for further substantial investments from the families.*

The Government had to stop all 'unhealthy practices' and see that industry or wealth was not concentrated in the hands of a few. This went well with the slogan of socialism. But the Government did it not by correcting entrepreneurs but by not allowing them to grow. This is the essence of the 1970 industrial policy. But the big business houses are the ones who have managerial skill, money and know-how and with their withdrawal from the field, both investment and production have fallen. (Only 113 industrial licences were issued in the first half of 1970, and hundreds more were awaiting decision.)

Finding shortfalls in the industrial sector the Planning Commission members pointed out to their Chairman (the Prime Minister), on 7 October 1970, that the rigid implementation of the new industrial policy with its distinct bias against large houses was responsible for the setback in private investments.* At the same time, the Commission expressed reservations on new ventures like the proposed small car project. (Mrs Gandhi's younger son has been given a letter of intent alongwith another party; the Government has also decided to create a public sector unit.)

A Planning Commission member told me later that political, not economic, considerations were behind the policy of not relaxing licensing restrictions; 'otherwise how would the party in power get money?' he asked.

What could Mrs Gandhi do? She had found radicalism the only stick with which to beat her opponents. She had also to stay left of centre; otherwise she was afraid the country would go red. Laws, policies and the like did not mould economic conditions; on the contrary, they were the outcome of those conditions. Why couldn't her critics understand her predication and programme? she wondered.

She was not against big business. She said so when President Nixon met her in New Delhi in August 1969. At that time,

* However, applications for industrial licences in 1970 were twice the number in 1969: nearly 2,400 against 1,200.

he made a specific inquiry about the Goa Fertilizer Plant which the Birla Group was setting up with American collaboration. She said that the project would go through.

Six months later the project was officially okayed, even though it earned her the temporary wrath of the 'Young Turks' in her party.

Her tactics made D. P. Mishra, her confidant, tell her: 'You are no Leftist; you are just pragmatic.' She said: 'Of course, I am pragmatic. Is there anything wrong in being that?'

And pragmatism also meant allowing not only the Western Powers but also the Soviet Union to play a role in India. And Russia has been playing an increasingly important role. Western investment* rose from Rs. 500 crores (£277.7 million) in 1947 to Rs. 1,286 crores (£714.4 million) in 1970 but keenness to invest is getting far less; India's policies are suspect.

On aid also Washington's opinion has changed. The U.S. delegation which visited New Delhi for bilateral talks in July 1968 said very frankly that the U.S. aid programme would have to be cut because of America's shift in emphasis from international affairs to domestic problems.

Now top U.S. officials in Washington say privately that knowing Moscow's economic incapacity they are positive that it cannot carry India on its shoulders alone, but if it wants to do so, let it; the dominant U.S. view is that India is a 'bottomless pit' and that 'whatever you give is not even a drop in the ocean'.

But Russia has been more than willing. Soviet trade has been rising; the volume of trade went up from Rs. 34.71 crores (£39.20 million) in 1957-58 and Rs. 189.75 crores (both ways) (£ 115 million) in 1964 to over Rs. 262.5 crores. (£159.05 million) in 1968. By March 1968 India had received Soviet credits and loans totalling Rs. 1,044.75 crores (£632.7 million) on easy terms of repayment; the aid committed by Moscow to India's Fourth Plan totals approximately Rs. 345 crores. (£ 209.05 million).

In industry Soviet interest is solely in the public sector. And one of its pet bogeys, especially after Nehru's death, is that India may go wholly 'capitalist'. At one stage (December 1968),

*There were 318 foreign companies in 1947 and 561 in 1970

Moscow got so worried that it sent post-haste S. Skachkov, Chairman of the Soviet State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, to find out why public sector undertakings were doing badly and whether New Delhi was shifting its emphasis to private enterprise.

India's case was that the two successive droughts had aggravated difficulties; its public sector undertakings were working far below their rated capacity. If only the Soviet Union could undertake to buy the excess product!

It was contended that some public sector undertakings like the Soviet-aided Heavy Machine Building Plant at Ranchi were too large for the country's needs. Skachkov recalled that the production capacity of 80,000 tons for the Ranchi plant was suggested by India's own Industries Minister at that time, Manubhai Shah. The Russians said that the suggestion implied a sense of complacency on the part of India's Economic Ministries. 'No further projects,' said the Soviets.

At that time, there were 28 Soviet-aided projects in India and all of them, except ten, were languishing. There were no orders, much of their built-in capacity remained unutilized and the returns were poor.

Things have not improved subsequently because a watchdog Parliamentary Committee, even though it had many Leftists and Communist members, said in 1970 that the Government had accepted some of the Soviet-sponsored projects for political rather than economic reasons.

Commenting on Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd., a Soviet financed public company, the Parliamentary Committee said:

They went into an agreement with Moscow on the basis of the assumption that onerous royalties would have to be paid to Western countries if they went into collaboration with them. The committee cannot help stating that the decision to enter into collaboration arrangements with the Soviet Union was taken on considerations other than technical and without conducting a demand survey or economic feasibility studies.

Moscow has blamed New Delhi in turn; Kosygin has told

Mrs Gandhi more than once that hibernation of planning begins when enthusiasm for the public sector cools. Unless a concrete attempt is made to improve the image of public sector undertakings the Government cannot step up public sector investment and activity.

Therefore, before the formulation of the Fourth Five-Year Plan, Moscow suggested a tie up between Government requirements and the public sector undertakings. No tender should be invited for Government needs, its own projects should be given orders straightforwardly. In a mixed economy, public and private undertakings are competing in many fields and in a country where the Constitution provides protection against discrimination, Moscow's suggestion was difficult to accept.

The Soviet Union has been particularly concerned about the Bhilai Steel Plant which it has helped to build. Its production, even though kept low, is not being fully utilized. Moscow has taunted New Delhi more than once how Tatas and Indian Iron and Steel—the two private ventures—have been able to market their entire produce while the public sector undertaking, Bhilai, could not.

The Government's explanation is that the private sector plants have been designed strictly according to market demand. Bhilai is primarily meant to produce equipment for the railways which has cut its development programme. This explanation has not satisfied Moscow. And as Skachkov told Mrs Gandhi in December 1968, Tatas' performance exceeded Bhilai's because partisan civil servants tended to favour the private sector. She should nationalize the entire steel industry, he suggested.

Mrs Gandhi did not agree to that but allowed the Russians to post more technicians at Bhilai to find out if they could make it a success. Employing similar pressure tactics in 1970 Skachkov was able to secure expansion of the Bokaro Steel Plant. But this time he did not meet with complete success in getting all the keys into Russian hands.

He had to agree that the Central Engineering and Design Bureau (CEDB) of Hindustan Steel (a company directing steel plants in the public sector), not a Soviet agency, should undertake the plant's expansion from 1.7 million tonnes to four

million tonnes. This meant a loss of Rs. 30 crores (£16.6 million) in consultancy fees for the Russians.

Skachkov must have remembered how in 1964 the Soviet Union was able to secure only at the last minute the order to build the Bokaro plant. On 7 April that year the Government of India had drawn up and initialled a contract with an Indian engineering firm to do the job. But the offer of Soviet credit did the trick; New Delhi was frantically looking for an investor after the U.S. Steel Corporation of Pittsburg opted out by raising the politically impossible demand that the Americans construct and operate the plant for 10 years before turning it over to India.

No doubt the Government of India felt embarrassed because the Indian engineering firm proved by facts and figures that the Bokaro project as conceived by the USSR was expensive and wasteful. The company also reminded the Government of the commitment it had made regarding consultancy. But the Government only gave the Indian firm ancillary works like the gas plant and labour housing to comply with the letter of the initialled contract. But the firm was promised the contract for expansion of the plant.

Skachkov was not troubled by this promise. The Soviet Union had secured the first contract to build the Bokaro plant, and his concern was how to get the second for expansion. Skachkov did not hesitate to use all the arrows he had in his quiver. India was dependent on Russia for its defence requirements, and he tried to emphasize this in his talks with Swaran Singh, then Defence Minister, who was concurrently holding the Steel portfolio. But Swaran Singh told him in his inimitably gentle way that he was negotiating as Steel Minister and defence matters should be kept out of the conversation. Skachkov got the point.

Skachkov then changed the tenor of his arguments; he said that the USSR had an unfavourable balance of trade with India and that it could be offset only if Moscow secured the expansion order. The Government of India could not possibly accept this premise because that had never been the criterion for granting any order. Moreover, it had a commitment with the Indian firm. It was bad enough to violate that

understanding; it would be worse if a contract was given to foreigners.

However, the fact is—as a Parliamentary Committee has pointed out—Bokaro will produce steel at a cost of about Rs. 4,000 (£ 222) a ton compared with Soviet estimates of Rs. 2,600 (£ 150).

The inadequate performance of public sector undertakings, the increasing expenditure on administration and other unproductive ventures, the failure of crops from 1965 to 1967, the tardy and niggardly economic assistance—all these things pulled down India's development in the sixties.

Even then it is commendable that industrial production has begun to pick up, probably with improvement in agriculture. True, the Plan targets have not been fulfilled but there has been a step-up in production of finished steel (4.7 million tons), fertilizers (541,000 tons), aluminium, automobiles, electric transformers, engineering goods, sugar, textiles and so on. Some 2,500 new ventures set up in the past decade have contributed towards establishing a wide industrial base.

The agriculture production envisaged at 3.8 per cent in the next decade will give self-sufficiency by 1973-74. And later India expects to export foodgrains.

Does this mean that India has reached the take-off or breakthrough stage? This is very difficult to say because no cliche can aptly describe an economy which is struggling against many natural and man-made difficulties to ensure a reasonable standard of living for a nation of 560 million.

In a totalitarian society there is an element of compulsion and force to goad the people, but democracy has to rely on persuasion and consensus. Either a whip should be used to entrust discipline or the spirit of national pride and dedication be kindled to evoke response. Probably, India has fallen between the two stools. There is no force, no fervour.

India's problems, as Mrs Gandhi once explained, is that it never went through an industrial revolution or a renaissance. Europe's expectations were aroused—and fulfilled—by these movements; in India hopes have built up without any parallel effort to meet them.

Both Marx and Malthus would predict doom because of

the 10-million increase in India's population* every year. So would many present-day economists. But India's performance has to be seen from a moral point of view, its development has to be measured against the heavy odds it faces and its achievements have to be judged from the meaning it gives to life for the poor.

Probably it is not a particular doctrine or dogma which India is after but the right type of idea which would eliminate contradictions, improve the plight of the poor quickly and speed up the rate of growth of the economy.

Each country has to develop according to its own genius and traditions; it is neither necessary nor desirable that the economy should become a monolithic, leaving no room for experimentation.

With all their burdens and problems, if the people of India are to cross 'the frontiers of a new world'—a slogan given by Nehru in the beginning of the sixties—the Government has to be more dedicated and purposeful. The accent has to be on the attainment of positive goals; raising of living standards, enlargement of opportunities and so on.

From that point of view, India's destination is quite distant. After all an average man still earns less than one rupee (1s 2d) a day. And until his lot is improved no solution to India's domestic problems is possible. Nor can it make an impact on foreign affairs which are essentially a projection of internal well-being.

*A family planning programme was started in 1951; then India's increase in population was about 1·3 per cent a year, but today it is double, 2·6 per cent. Only 2 per cent of reproductive couples systematically use contraceptive methods. However, the Government is making earnest efforts to curb the rate of growth; condoms are subsidized and made available in every village at five paise each (less than a pence). The inverted red triangle which is India's symbol for family planning has been accepted throughout the world. 'But villagers in India do not worry much about the number of children they have, no matter how poor they might be. Not to have any issue is considered to be a much greater disaster than to have too many', says an expert.

CHAPTER 3

Years of Disillusionment

ASKED TO NAME THE country which came closest to India's foreign policy, Mrs Gandhi once said: 'Yugoslavia'. In explanation the Prime Minister said that it pursued a socialist policy and like India, steered clear of the two blocs, the Soviet and the American, to be able to devote attention to building its economy instead of being caught in the cross fire.

This is the essence of India's foreign policy of non-alignment—to stay away from involvement. Nehru formulated it when the country became independent. His ambition was to develop India quickly and he knew that he could do so only by keeping aloof from the enmities of the Big Powers. He would often say that America had done so in its early days to get time to build when the British left. Why should not India?

Once Nixon asked him what India needed the most. Nehru's reply was: 'Twenty-five years of peace'. It was strange that Nehru should keep foreign policy separate from economic problems. While he acted like an honest broker in dealing with the Big Powers, his Finance Ministry begged for even half per cent decrease in interest on loans from the West. Even today the Indian foreign policy suffers from lack of appreciation of the fact that foreign and economic affairs are the two ends of the same stick.

But Nehru's non-alignment did not quite mean the old isolationism of America. It had another edge to restrain the United States and the Soviet Union from starting World War III through the moral pressure of uncommitted nations.

Those were the days, the late forties and fifties, when the winds of the cold war had frozen all independent action. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were forcing nation after nation to bend to their way of thinking and pattern of Government and the argument was that otherwise they would lose their independence.

It was strange logic that to remain free a country had to surrender at least part of its freedom to either of the two Big Powers. But with the fear of another world war the herd instinct worked. Most nations opted for what was called 'collective security'.

Nehru refused to join either of the blocs. Instead of collective security for the smaller nation it would mean collective danger if the two Super Powers decided to go to war, he argued. He said that the developing countries should remain independent, judge every issue on its merits and put their weight in favour of peace; only then they might be able to ward off hostilities and get enough respite to build themselves economically.

He won over to this line of reasoning Yugoslavia's Tito, Egypt's Nasser and Indonesia's Soekarno. It must be said to Nehru's credit that he succeeded in his lifetime in organizing the first Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung, Indonesia (April 1955), where to his later regret he himself introduced China's Chou En-lai* to the delegates, and subsequently a meeting of the Third World, a community of non-committed members in Belgrade (September 1961), where he displeased Soekarno and Gana's Nkrumah by advocating that colonialism was a dead horse which need not be whipped any longer to evoke kinship and anti-West feelings.

The concept of not joining any Power bloc also suited the genius of India which had been nurtured in the preachings of non-violence by Lord Buddha (563-483 B.C.), and Emperor Asoka (273-232 B.C.), who withdrew from the Kalinga battle on the point of victory on the ground that hostilities did not solve

*After the Chinese attack on India in October 1962, Shastri told many persons: 'We are the ones who in fact introduced Prime Minister Chou En-lai to the non-aligned Powers in Bandung.' When this remark reached Chou En-lai he reportedly observed that he was surprised at the 'effrontery of a third-rate Power like India claiming to introduce to the world the Prime Minister of a first-rate Power like China'.

any problem, and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). Nehru, like Asoka, repeatedly said that wars settled nothing and advocated at world forums—at times overzealously—employment of peaceful methods to find solutions to disputes.

Incorporating the same sentiments, he enunciated *Panchsheel* (five tenets): (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) non-aggression, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence.

First spelt out in 1954 in the Preamble to the Sino-Indian Treaty on Tibet, *Panchsheel* was made meaningless by Peking's communization of Tibet through force. New Delhi had accepted Peking's suzerainty over Tibet but felt horrified by the terrorism let loose there and the way the Dalai Lama, its religious and temporal head, was obliged to flee Lhasa. In fact, Chinese annoyance with India, already simmering over the border alignment, turned into a conflagration from the day New Delhi gave asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959.

Nehru felt hurt that Peking never appreciated the fact that he persuaded the Dalai Lama to go to Lhasa when he wanted to stay back during his visit in 1956-57 and restrained him from setting up a Government in exile in India after 1959. In fact, Nehru told the Dalai Lama specifically not to propagate against China.

The West never gave credit to Nehru for upholding moral values even at the point of annoying the Chinese leaders. All that it repeated was that had not India 'bought' peace by allowing China to occupy Tibet* in 1950-51, the Dalai Lama would not have been hounded out of his country.

In fact, Western criticism was that India's non-alignment

*India's Ambassador to China, Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, who was overfriendly to Peking, defended Peking's action on the plea that China was afraid of 'Anglo-American machinations' in Tibet. When Sardar Patel, then Home Minister, came to know of this he protested to Nehru in a letter dated 7 November 1950, that 'this feeling, if genuinely entertained by the Chinese in spite of your direct approaches to them, indicates that, even though we regard ourselves as the friends of China, the Chinese do not regard us as their friends. With Communist mentality of "whoever is not with them being against them", this is a significant pointer of which we have to take due note.'

policy was soft towards the Communists. As days went by, non-alignment was attacked for being biased in favour of Moscow. To some extent, this impression was created by Nehru's preference for socialistic ways, Fabian or to be more correct, his acceptance of the Marxist interpretation of history. In his autobiography he wrote about the appeal of the Soviet Union although he resented its 'regimentation and unnecessary violence'.

Nehru thought that the West would not question India's bona fides since it had opted for democracy; its non-alignment might well look like tilting towards Russia but it was all to the good because it opened a window to the East, the Communist world. The West never appreciated this fact and at times went to the extent of suspecting Nehru of harbouring pro-Communist feelings.

The West, particularly America, felt disappointed and exasperated because obsessed as it was by the military and ideological threat of Russia, it was looking for strategic alliances. India looked like a natural democratic confere but it refused to be treated either as 'a bulwark against Communism' or to go along with Washington's then policy of encircling the Soviet Union with military bases.

In comparison, Moscow, which had once called Mahatma Gandhi 'the running dog of imperialism', had completely changed its policy and came to New Delhi's support without reservations; it offered 'support' to India for not 'allowing itself to be drawn into military blocs'.

In the fifties, Moscow vetoed all West-sponsored resolutions on Kashmir at the UN. During their visit to India in 1955, Bulganin, then Soviet Premier, and Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Russian Communist Party, stated categorically that Kashmir was an integral part of India. The latter went to the extent of saying that if New Delhi ever required help it had only to shout because 'we are just across the mountains'.

And at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in February 1956, Khrushchev preached the policy of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence practised by 'countries like the Indian Republic'. He acknowledged India's role in the ending of the war in Korea and Indo-China and said that 'a weighty contribu-

tion to the cause of strengthening peace in Asia and in the whole world has been made by the great Indian Republic'.

In fact, the Communist countries began using non-aligned New Delhi as a channel to communicate its reactions to the Western world. It happened in 1950 when New Delhi extricated Washington from the war in Korea and then in Indo-China in 1954 when India helped every nation involved in it to save its face.

America also came to rely on this link, so much so that in 1965 Washington asked Shastri, then Prime Minister, to use his good offices with Moscow to stop the fighting in Vietnam.

And when Shastri during one of his visits to Moscow conveyed the US desire to the Soviet Union, Brezhnev, then the First Secretary of the CPSU, said that America must first stop aerial bombing. Shastri, briefed by Washington at that time, said that America had done so before but there was no response. Brezhnev said: 'Nobody noticed it Let them really stop it and see the results.' Ultimately when Washington stopped aerial bombing, the peace talks began in Paris.

Five years later (June 1970) Moscow once again informed New Delhi that Hanoi was willing to make a positive gesture at the deadlocked peace talks in Paris provided the USA was willing to announce a time-table for the complete withdrawal of its forces from Indo-China. First, L. K. Jha, India's Ambassador to the USA, conveyed this to the State Department and later Mrs Gandhi herself wrote to President Nixon

* * *

Nehru's talk of peace, however irritating like a priest's sermon, began to go down well and many nations, big and small, saw in him a person who was wedded to peace, reflecting a mature judgment of world affairs.

Therefore, it was not surprising when Kennedy, then US President, asked Nehru during his trip to the USA in November 1961 what America should do in Vietnam. 'Mr Prime Minister, you know that area more than many men and I want your advice', Kennedy asked repeatedly, but Nehru kept quiet. However, two days later, when the then Foreign Secretary,

Manilal Jagdashbhai Desai, accompanying Nehru during the trip, was about to leave for the State Department for discussions, Nehru shouted: 'Tell them not to go to Vietnam. They will get stuck there.'

India's or rather Nehru's stock at that time was high. The world on the whole respected New Delhi's moral stature. Then came the action in Goa (18 December 1961). The reaction of the West was hostile. Those who admired Nehru most felt all the more let down. How could a country preaching to others the efficacy of peaceful methods resort to violence?

America's then representative to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, was most vehement and characterized India's action as 'the use of armed force by one State against another and against its will'. New Delhi's own pronouncements were its Achilles' heel.

He said: 'The Indian tradition of non-violence has inspired the whole world, but this act of force with which we are confronted today mocks the faith of India's frequent declarations of exalted principle.' He did not consult even the US President or the State Department before making such a vitriolic attack on India. He felt personally hurt as many liberals in the West did.

To some extent, the disillusionment of the Western countries was genuine but the tone of criticism indicated that they were waiting for an opportunity to pounce upon Nehru, the apostle of non-alignment, who for them had turned out to have feet of clay.

The attack on India was so severe and so persistent that it appeared as if the people were genuinely disappointed in having lost the only country which encouraged them to believe that peaceful methods would ultimately prevail over violent ways in settling disputes. Whatever the reasoning Nehru's stature fell and with him India's.

B. K. Nehru, India's Ambassador to America at that time, described* Kennedy's reactions thus:

After the attack on Goa, the entire American opinion became hostile. It was not that the people had turned against us but was their ~~not~~ ^{not} that even India the one country

which said it would solve its problems through peaceful methods, had gone under.

After some days I went to the White House one morning. Kennedy was getting ready. I spoke to Mrs Kennedy and she said that Jack was angry. 'You must talk to him', she added.

I got hold of Kennedy near the lift and said: 'Mr. President I believe you are angry with us'. He said: 'I have not uttered a word, not a thing on Goa. Mr Ambassador, India could have taken over Goa fourteen years ago; it was yours. What you have done now any self-respecting country would have done then to assert its sovereignty. But you should not have preached us morality for fourteen years. You had no business to indulge in the hoher-than-thou attitude when you are just like any other nation. The reason why people are criticizing you is because they have seen a minister coming out of a brothel. They are happily clapping that he is like them, like any other normal human being'

Kennedy* was also hurt that Nehru, whom he held in high esteem, did not tell him about the action on Goa when they were together only a fortnight earlier. (Nehru was in Washington in November 1961.)

Little did Kennedy know or realize that decisions in India on war or peace are taken at the last minute without any prior preparation or without any mature thinking about repercussions.

B.K. Nehru has his own view on who was responsible for the Goa action. 'Was it Nehru or Krishna Menon?' he asked during our talk. The US State Department, he said, made a request 'one or two days' before the Goa action to postpone it by six months during which time America would try for a peaceful transfer of Goa to India. If it failed, India was at liberty to go ahead with its plans.

B K. Nehru said that when he contacted M. J. Desai over the telephone he told him: 'Forces have already marched towards Goa. It is too late to stop them.' B K. Nehru's hunch was

*He had another grievance: by this time he had been conveyed the personal remarks Nehru had made against the Kennedy family on his way back to New Delhi.

that Nehru was presented with a *fait accompli*. 'Between Krishna Menon and Karnail Singh [then Chief of the Indian Railways] things were messed up.'

According to B.K. Nehru, Nehru himself was not keen to move against Goa but it was Krishna Menon's forthcoming election—he was contesting in the 1962 poll from Bombay, 200 miles from Goa—that made Nehru do it.

At the meeting of the Internal Committee of the Cabinet where action against Goa was decided upon without fixing a definite date Krishna Menon did most of the talking. Nehru was quiet. It was Mrs Lakshmi Menon, then Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, who cautioned patience and pleaded with Nehru to think of the likely repercussions in the world capitals. Significantly, Morarji Desai, who had said just before the meeting that he was against the attack on moral grounds, was silent at the Cabinet meeting. (However, Desai told me in October 1970 that he did oppose the Goa action in the Cabinet.)

The Americans must have been genuinely hurt by India's action against Goa. I recall a conversation I had with a young American hitch-hiker to whom I had given a lift in my car.

'When did you come to India?' I asked.

'Two days ago.'

'Where are you going?'

'I want to reach Bombay and then take the first ship to go back.'

'Why so soon?'

'I am sick. Your claim of possessing moral and spiritual values makes me sick. You preach something to us but when it comes to you, as it happened in Goa, you are as gun-crazy as we are.'

However, Russia applauded India's action. The Soviet delegation resolutely objected to Portugal's attempts to make the Security Council 'an accomplice to Portuguese colonialism'.

When India's military action in Goa came up for discussion at the UN, Kosygin, Vice-Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, said that the liberation of Goa, besides other things, was also an action strengthening world peace, because vestiges of colonialism continued to be a source of international danger. Later, when the Western Powers wanted to send a commission

to Goa, the Soviet Union had the proposal killed by saying 'No'.

The action in Goa sent a wave of enthusiasm all over the country and provided a morale-booster at a time when China was nibbling at India's territory with the building up of the Aksai-Chin road along the Sinkiang caravan route, north-west of India.

The road came to the official notice of New Delhi for the first time in 1958. India's Military Attaché stationed in Peking detected it in a small Chinese map which he enlarged and showed to the then Indian Ambassador, R. K. Nehru. The Ambassador did not encourage him. (In fact, both the Indian Embassy in Peking and the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi had been receiving for some time bits of evidence but they were dismissing them as signs of war mongering on the part of those who reported them.)

Three years earlier, in 1955, Lakshman Singh, India's Trade Representative in Tibet, had informed New Delhi about the building of the Aksai-Chin road. His contacts in Tibet were wide and his sources of information the labourers who were working on the road. But nobody in the Government had read his report which was poorly worded because of his limited knowledge of English and poorly typed because of the use of an old typewriter. (Lakshman Singh was later given the President's award, Padma Shree,* in recognition of his vigilance.)

'Errors' in Chinese maps were nothing new, Nehru had raised the question in his discussion with Chou En-lai many a time, more pointedly in 1954 and 1957. But every time the Chinese Prime Minister would say that they were Kuomintang Government's maps which his Government had no time to correct. However, he was always general in his replies and never even once said that he accepted boundaries shown in the Indian maps.

New Delhi's case was that from the sixth century onwards it was known that the southern limits of Sinkiang lay along the

*India abolished titles after independence but introduced awards: Bharat Ratna, Padma Vibhushan, and Padma Shree for meritorious services in different fields.

Kuen Lun ranges and, therefore, the Aksai-Chin Plateau and the Lingzi Tang plains were never a part of China or Sinkiang.

Subsequently, India produced 600 pieces of documentary evidence (when the Indian and Chinese officials met in 1960 to discuss the boundary question) to establish that these areas had been utilized by the people of Ladakh, a mountainous and sparsely populated area in Kashmir, and administered by the Governments of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. And, therefore, they were India's.

New Delhi's other point was that the revenue and assessment reports covering in detail all the territory claimed by China showed that the trade routes running through this area were maintained by the Kashmir Government. Police check-posts had been manned by the Kashmir Government in the northern Aksai-Chin area as far back as 1865. And in 1870 the British Indian Government signed an agreement with the Government of Kashmir securing permission to survey the trade routes in those areas. By building the road in the Aksai-Chin area, it was argued China had occupied in the Ladakh region a part of India which, by treaty and tradition, had all along been treated as India's.

On the eastern side, New Delhi referred to an agreement concerning the traditional and customary boundary between the territories of India and Tibet, confirmed through a bilateral instrument signed by the Plenipotentiaries of India and Tibet. China had not only acknowledged the equal and plenipotentiary status of the Tibetan representative at the Simla conference of 1914 but had initiated the agreement and had never raised any objection to it. The only consideration that China had voiced against ratifying the treaty was its desire to draw the inner line in Tibet as further down as possible so that Peking would have more territory under its direct control.

When informed of the Aksai-Chin road, Nehru's first reaction was to keep the news secret. He would get angry if any official asked for guidance or action. Later, information about the road began to pour in from all sources, even the American and the British. Since Nehru was over-sensitive about any reference to the Chinese occupation of Indian territory, all such information was merely filed at the Ministry.

Probably, Nehru did not want to divert his attention from developmental activity because manning the 2,400-mile Sino-Indian border meant diverting money to defence. Probably, he was conscious of the consequences of an armed clash with China; it would be like a clash between 'two giants', he would tell public meetings, the repercussions of which would be felt all over the world for many many years.

Whatever the reason, Nehru opted for a quiet effort through diplomatic channels. First, Indian officials wrote to their Chinese counterparts, politely pointing out that Peking was ignoring India's traditional boundaries. In a formal note, dated 21 August 1958, India specified the errors in the delineation of the boundaries in Chinese maps. What concerned New Delhi most was that Peking had depicted a part of Bhutan* as within Tibet.

The Chinese in reply reiterated that the alignment in their maps was based on old ones which would be corrected after fresh consultations and surveys. However, there was no commitment of any kind, not even on Bhutan. This made New Delhi suspect; it decided to send patrol parties in the area where Peking was following a 'forward policy' of its own.

By then reports on the Aksai-Chin road began appearing in newspapers, first abroad and then in India. The Government could not keep the nation in the dark any longer; it confirmed the story of the Aksai-Chin road. The people who had been encouraged to believe in the slogan of *Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai* (Indians and Chinese are brothers) were shocked. For the first time in his life, Nehru heard his countrymen say that he had betrayed them. Never before had Nehru faced such a hostile Parliament; it was not in a mood to accept any compromise formula on the Aksai-Chin road. Nehru's options were closing rapidly.

In early September 1958 New Delhi sent two Indian patrols into the Aksai-Chin area 'on normal rounds'. One returned, the other did not. After waiting for some weeks, India enquired from China about the fate of the second patrol.

Peking replied two months later that 'frontier guards of the

*Bhutan is a territory in the north-east of India whose external affairs are looked after by New Delhi.

Chinese Liberation Army stationed in the south western part of Sinkiang discovered in succession on 8 and 12 September 1958 two groups of Indian armed personnel at Tahung Liutan and Kezrekirekan on the Sinkiang-Tibet road on Chinese territory, and had taken action against them'.

But New Delhi claimed that at Kong Ka Pass—not far from the newly built Aksai-Chin road—the second patrol met Chinese border forces who opened fire and killed nine Indian policemen. Nine others were captured. A few Chinese soldiers tied an Indian policeman to a horse's tail and dragged him all over the place to amuse themselves. The captured persons were brain-washed for two months and then returned to India.

Indian opinion was agitated over the incident. Govind Ballabh Pant,* then, Home Minister, observed: 'We can never trust the Chinese again. Sardar Patel was quite right in warning us against them.'

The reference was to a letter which Patel wrote to Nehru on 7 November 1950, almost ten years before: 'The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and that Communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam.'

It must be conceded that soon after Tibet was taken over by the Chinese (1950-51) Nehru wanted strengthening of the administration in the North East Frontier Agency—a Union territory bordering China. A committee was also appointed under General Himmatsinhji, then the Army Chief, to report on border security in the north and north-east.

Even when the Indian patrol clashed with the Chinese, New Delhi still did not take its row with Peking seriously; Nehru went on saying that it was a clash of wills, not of arms. And he continued to take care not to annoy Peking.

For example, in the 1959 summer when a doctor was to be

*I was his Press Officer from 1956 till his death in early 1960.

dropped by parachute in Longju, right on the McMahon Line, India gave prior information to China lest the flight of the aircraft should be taken to be provocative if it inadvertently flew over the traditional boundary. And whenever the Ministry of External Affairs received reports of Chinese intrusion into Indian territory, it would address a polite letter to Peking to point out that some persons entered Indian territory without travel documents.

Even at this stage India had hoped that its differences with China would not reach a point of no return. When Peking published on 8 September 1959 an official map showing even NEFA as part of Chinese territory, Nehru was left with no choice except to resist Peking's cartographic aggression—and claims—with all arguments he could command. He had to give an undertaking to Parliament that he would negotiate with China only after it had vacated Indian territory.

Peking's attitude also stiffened, it said that the boundary between the two countries had not been formally delineated and claimed that Ladakh had been a part of Tibet until the nineteenth century. China also questioned the boundaries of Kashmir and Sikkim and Bhutan (the two territories under India's tutelage) even though Peking had categorically recognized the validity of the 1890 Convention which expressly acknowledged India's responsibility for Sikkim's external affairs.

Even when pressed to say something specific during his visit to Delhi on 25 April 1960, Chou En-lai merely said at a Press conference: 'China respects India's relationship with Bhutan and Sikkim.' Later when the *Peking Review* published the text of the interview, the words 'proper relations' were added. All India Radio had recorded the Press conference and when New Delhi pointed out the discrepancy, Peking never replied.

In July 1962 when Krishna Menon, Defence Minister (1957-62), was in Geneva in connection with the negotiations on Indo-China he met Chen Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister, probably without the prior authority of Nehru. According to Menon, he saw 'a possibility' of solving the border problem.

The proposal they discussed was that India accept Chinese suzerainty over the Aksai-Chin area where it had built the road to link Sinkiang and Tibet, and also concede a 10-mile strip to

serve as a 'buffer' to the road, and China in exchange recognize India's sovereignty over the rest of Ladakh and the McMahon Line in the other areas. (There is, however, no record of this proposal in the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Nehru was reportedly in favour of this 'package deal' or to a suggestion that the Aksai-Chin area be given to China on a perpetual lease. After all, what did India lose materially? 'Not a blade of grass' grew in that area.

But his own Cabinet Ministers could not see the logic of his thinking. He had experienced how they rallied opinion both in the Congress party and in the Opposition against any compromise with China 'at the expense of Indian territory'.

When Chou En-lai came to Delhi in April 1960, Nehru arranged a meeting between the Chinese Prime Minister and Pant to assure the Congress party that he was not seeking a compromise at the expense of India's honour. He also wanted Peking to realize that his colleagues were equally firm.

But in Parliament members raised objections even to his meeting with Chou En-lai before 'the vacation of aggression by China', and Nehru had to make a distinction between 'exploratory talks' and 'formal negotiations'.

The meeting between Pant and Chou En-lai was businesslike. (According to Krishna Menon* Pant was rude.)

Starting from the Ladakh side and ending with the Thag La Ridge, the point on the eastern side which India claimed, Pant tried to establish the watershed theory—that the point from which water flowed to either side should be taken as the dividing line. The line could not be straight, he argued, and would follow the crest of the high dividing range. (Peking agreed by implication to the watershed theory while signing border treaties with Burma and Nepal.)

Chou En-lai explained how important the road it had built to link Sinkiang with Tibet was for China. Without it, China had no way of reaching Sinkiang, he argued. Pant's reply was that India was ready to guarantee safe and free traffic (only civil) between Tibet and Sinkiang but would not part with its terri-

*Krishna Menon told me this on 16 September 1970.

tory. Chou En-lai kept quite, but he did hint at dangerous consequences if India stuck to its point.

During this visit, Chou En-lai questioned the very validity of the McMahon Line, the north-east boundary. When Pant began on the presumption that the McMahon Line was a settled fact, Chou En-lai pointed out that the line was open to 'interpretations'.

Nonetheless, he gave enough hints to suggest that he was ready for a package deal and would accept the actual line of control. This meant that on the Ladakh side Aksai-Chin would remain with Peking because its forces were already there and on the eastern side, India would reach up to the McMahon Line because it was in occupation of NEFA.

The same offer was made by Chou En-lai in July 1961 during his conversation with R. K. Nehru, once the Indian Ambassador to China. According to R. K. Nehru,* the Chinese Prime Minister told him that his Government would accept the national McMahon boundary and also recognize India's tutelage over Sikkim and Bhutan provided India accepted Chinese claim over northern Tibet through which the Aksai-Chin road ran. (Chou En-lai also threw out a feeler to R. K. Nehru that Pakistan was making overtures but he was for India.)

When Nehru came to know that the talk between Chou En-lai and Pant had been far from pleasant, he asked Krishna Menon to meet Chou En-lai. Menon's reply was that he could not retrieve the situation, particularly when the nation was holding him personally responsible for Chinese 'intransigence'. Nehru then asked moderate Swaran Singh to talk to Chou En-lai, more in an effort to ease the atmosphere than to discuss anything serious.

Before Chou En-lai's departure from Delhi the two countries agreed on a scrutiny of their differing claims on the boundary. The Indian Government appointed a two-member team, both officials were drawn from the Ministry of External Affairs. One of them, Gopal, the only son of the then President, Radhakrishnan, went all the way to London to rummage history records and find material to support India's case.

*In an interview with the author in October 1970

He was happy to have got some but the British Government did not part with many manuscripts. The Chinese Embassy in London tried its best to sabotage the project but the Mountbattens were a great help to India. (Unconfirmed reports are that the Chinese tried to snatch some material from Gopal in mid-air on his way to India.)

Officials of both countries met in Peking, New Delhi and Rangoon to substantiate evidence in support of India's traditional border. Indian officials contended that the Chinese side provided very little evidence to support their claims, and the little they produced was 'entirely inconsistent' with both facts and arguments. It was claimed just as Pant had done—that the boundary lay along the main watershed in the region. Even to its own surprise, the Indian team was able to produce a weighty and cogent case.

The Chinese argued that no boundary delineation had taken place and, in fact, none was possible because of 'the traditional and customary' nature of the line. Peking did not have documentary evidence to support its case. It quoted Nehru many a time and once his remark that 'no blade of grass grew there' was cited to prove that India had no control over northern Ladakh.

In fact, the approach of the Chinese team was negative, and it went on repeating that what India claimed was not true without spelling out what was true. However, Peking's team did produce some old Indian maps which did not show certain territory within India as claimed by New Delhi's team.

By this time, New Delhi had realized that there were some Survey of India maps which showed certain territory under China which was India's.

A circular was issued to Government offices to return 'all the incriminating material'. Entry of foreign publications containing 'erroneous maps' was also stopped under the age-old Customs Act. Later, the Cabinet decided to proscribe all books and maps which questioned the integrity of the border. The Law Ministry, however, pointed out that this should apply only to publications that showed the border 'in a manner which is likely to be prejudicial to the safety or security of India'.

Nehru was in favour of blacking out 'objectionable' portions

of maps but bureaucracy banned all maps and books 'questioning' India's borders and said it was necessitated by considerations of 'the safety or security of India'. (Between 1962 and 1968 the entry of as many as fifty-eight foreign publications, mostly geography books, was stopped.)

* * *

So indiscriminatory was the scrutiny of publications at times that there was a demand to ban the May 1968 issue of the *Readers' Digest* which published a map of Asia without showing the political boundaries of any country but had Kashmir printed in capital letters. The map was published with an article by Nixon, who held no office at that time.

The matter went up to the Home Ministry which said that the map did not show the political boundaries of India and that 'the intention of the article by Mr Richard Nixon accompanying the map was not to prejudice the interest of the safety or the "security of India". The matter was then dropped but it showed how touchy the Government had become on the question of maps.

There were some Soviet maps which showed wrongly the entire North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) of India as part of China. New Delhi was greatly embarrassed and brought it to the notice of Moscow. The Soviet reply then was—and has been repeated since—that the Soviet surveyors' attention had been drawn to India's complaint and they would 'soon' look into it. Foreign Secretary Kaul's visit in October 1970 made only a marginal difference; Aksai-Chin is still not shown as part of India.

* * *

If New Delhi had imagined that after the meeting between Chou En-lai and Indian leaders in April 1960 and the subsequent discussions between the officials of the two sides a solution to the boundary problem would be found it was mistaken. By the middle of 1961, Chinese border forces had advanced 70 miles west of the Sinkiang-Tibet road from where they were in 1958.

This meant occupation of 12,000 square miles of Indian territory.

As a precaution against continuing encroachments New Delhi also started establishing police posts wherever it could find a suitable place, sometimes even behind the Chinese lines. This was known as 'Nehru's Forward Policy' and its purpose was not only to register India's claim to as much territory as possible but also to stall Peking's advance.

Krishna Menon told me that nobody in India appreciated the fact that 'I encroached upon 4,000 sq. miles of territory belonging to China'.

The Army was approached to take over the posts but it pointed out that it would be foolish to man them unless logistic support could be provided. The Finance Ministry said that it had no money to spare; in fact, there was inter-Ministry rivalry between Defence and Finance at that time.

The External Affairs Ministry, in charge of NEFA, was able to push administration as far to the border as possible. The Defence Ministry's advice was that the farther the better from India's security point of view.

Nehru summoned General Thapar, then Chief of the Army Staff, and suggested that India should set up check-posts to stop the Chinese from 'nibbling at our territory'. He also wrote a note for the guidance of Government officials on the same lines.

The army started setting up posts, most of which were established between May and July 1962. When a post was established at Galwan, Peking promptly protested, claiming Galwan as being in Chinese territory. Chou En-lai said: 'If India sets up a post in the Galwan valley, Chinese troops will cross the McMahon Line.' New Delhi kept quiet.

Later, when India set up a post at Dhola near Thag La* (NEFA) which the Chinese called Che Dong (three miles south of the McMahon Line and south of a small river called Namka Chu), Peking got really worried and sent its soldiers on 8 September 1962 to surround it. The Government of India did not expect it; it did not want to precipitate matters and decided only

*New Delhi considered Thag La Ridge the highest mountain, the farthest end of the boundary in that area.

to lodge a protest. But before it could do so, Peking withdrew its men. The two sides which had left the area unpatrolled for many years in the past now tried to assert their jurisdiction.

However, in the three days during which India's check-post remained under siege, the Chinese built a post of their own about two miles away, right opposite to India's. The Government did not disclose this incident to the public until a week later.

Nehru was then away in London to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Some Indian officials there persuaded him to call for a meeting between India and China to consider the report of officials on the boundary. But Krishna Menon, then on his way to New York, stopped in London and made Nehru change his mind. In fact, the cable sent to New Delhi was in favour of strong action against China.

The siege of the Indian check-post by the Chinese spread a wave of indignation across the country, and Nehru was attacked by name for inaction. Nehru's 'dual policy' of strengthening border defences while seeking a negotiated peaceful settlement was taken as cover for cowardice. The Government was under a persistent and vituperative attack with a mounting demand for quick action against the Chinese.

Somewhat peeved by the criticism, the Government ordered General Thapar to evict the Chinese from the post which they had built in Indian territory. The Army Chief was reluctant, he said that it would be like 'disturbing a hornet's nest' *. A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Krishna Menon, who was all for action, but the Army was not prepared for the task.

General Thapar argued that the Indian Army did not have the strength needed; the ratio was six Chinese to one Indian. Krishna Menon disclosed that he had met Chen Yi at Geneva and had been assured that China would never fight with India over the border issue. (When I asked Menon specifically whether this information given to me by General Thapar was true, his reply was: 'That toothless old woman, he did not know how to fight a war. What he says is absolutely false.)

Present at that meeting was Desai, then Foreign Secretary,

*The author's talk with General Thapar on 29 and 30 July 1970

who said that Moscow had conveyed to New Delhi its assessment that China would never attack India. Bhola Nath Malik, then Director of Intelligence, said that his information was that even though the Chinese had six divisions in Tibet, they were busy fighting the Khampas (followers of the Dalai Lama) and therefore might not be in a position to fight India.

Harish Chander Sarin, then Joint Defence Secretary, who was also present at the meeting said: 'Sir, I am confident that if we were to raise one brigade at Dhola, the Chinese would run away.'

General Thapar stuck to his original stand that the Indian Army could not get involved in a war, not a mountain war in any case. He further argued that its equipment was not only inadequate but poor.

Thapar recalled that in a note he had submitted soon after taking over as Chief of the Army Staff in 1960 he had pointed out that Army equipment was in such bad shape and in such short supply that China or Pakistan could easily defeat India. This was in sharp contrast to Nehru's statement before Parliament: 'I can tell the House that at no time since our independence have our defences been in better condition and finer fettle.'

It looked as if the Government was determined to fight the Chinese without bothering to reorganize or re-equip the Army. At the meeting, Thapar was supported by only one person, Vishwanathan, now the Governor of Kerala, who was then representing the Home Ministry. He said there was no use in being foolhardy if the General felt that India was unprepared.

Finding the Defence Minister and practically all others opting for an immediate operation, Thapar asked for an interview with the Prime Minister to seek his intervention. A few minutes before his departure for Nehru's house Malik met him and said: 'General, if I were you, I would not express my fears before Panditji for he might think that you are afraid to fight.' Thapar's curt reply was that he must tell the Prime Minister the truth; the rest was for him to decide.

Before Thapar got into his car, Malik again said that he must realize that if India did not fight, the Government would fall. Thapar did not argue further but he was confirmed in his view more than ever before that the decision to resist China was motivated by political considerations.

To Nehru, Thapar repeated how the Indian Army was unprepared, untrained and unequipped for the operation it was being asked to undertake. (Krishna Menon told me that before he became Defence Minister, there was no army worth the name and no equipment.)

Nehru said that Menon had informed him that India was itself producing a substantial part of Army equipment. But Thapar emphasized that India was nowhere near the stage of even assembling equipment worth the name. He then mentioned the note he had submitted complaining about the poor shape of the Army and its equipment. Nehru said he had never seen it.

To reassure Thapar, Nehru told him that he had received reliable information that the Chinese would not offer resistance if there was a show of force to make them vacate the check-post. Thapar knew from where the information had come. Obviously no note was taken of the Chinese warnings in their protests and in Peking Radio broadcasts that 'the Indian aggressor must bear full responsibility for the consequences of their crimes'.

The General was still not prepared to take the risk. He asked Nehru himself to talk to some of the Army Commanders. Lt-Gen Lionel Prodip Sen, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, who was in Thapar's room in the Defence Ministry at that time, was summoned. He supported Thapar and said that the Army was far from prepared. Nehru again repeated that his information was that the Chinese would not hit back.

Thapar took heart from this; if that was true even his unprepared force might wear the crown of victory. No General can resist the temptation of marching at the head of a winning army; Thapar was no exception. He started preparing for the action.

'Looking back, I think I should have submitted my resignation at that time. I might have saved my country from the humiliation of defeat', Thapar told me on 29 July 1970.

A special Task Force was created to 'speed up operations' to throw out the Chinese from the post they had set up in Indian territory. Lt-Gen Balmukand Kaul, then Chief of the General

Staff, and known to be a favourite of Nehru and Menon (Shastri called him 'Panditji's weakness'), was to command the force. Obviously, this was a snap decision. The Defence Ministry's Secretariat came to know of it only through newspapers, which had been briefed by Kaul himself.

The selection was Menon's. 'There was no one else to volunteer', Menon told me. Thapar said that he agreed to Kaul's appointment because as Chief of the General Staff he was familiar with the strategy of establishing check-posts in the forward area. 'However, I did not want to send him back to head the task force after his illness [during Kaul's illness, Lt-Gen Harbaksh Singh was the Corps Commander] because it meant changing the Corps Commander over again. But at that time I was persuaded by Panditji not to stand in Kaul's way.'

Thapar's after-the-event assessment was that the publicity given to the formation of the Task Force infuriated Peking and on 6 October when Indian newspapers headlined the story, the Chinese Government issued orders for attack. 'Normally, the time given to a force to attack is a fortnight and the attack is timed at the break of daylight', said Thapar. 'This was what happened. The attack came on 20 October, at 5 A.M. in the eastern sector where the sun rises early, and at 7 A.M. in the Ladakh area where daylight is late'.

According to Thapar, Nehru's statement on 12 October at New Delhi airport that Indian forces had been ordered to throw the Chinese out of NEFA might have exacerbated Peking further but could not have provoked the attack.

'Eight days are not enough for such a large operation'* Thapar told me. (However, when he read Nehru's statement, Thapar went to Menon who said that it was a 'political statement' and that the Prime Minister had mentioned no time limit; it could be '10 days, 100 days or 1000 days'.)

After a few days' stay in the border area, Kaul sent a telegram to Thapar that he wanted to return to Delhi to report to him personally. Thapar called him at once. The assessment of

*Kangting, the nearest city from the Indian border, is more than 1,000 miles away. Many days of preparation must have been taken to build up the petrol dump and other supply material for the attack.

Kaul, who had seen a bit of Chinese action in a skirmish on 9 October, was that 'it was a treacherous country' and that the Chinese were far more prepared than they imagined.

Thapar was somewhat disappointed with Brig. J. P. Dalvi's assessment because he, as the head of the brigade at Dholka at that time, had never mentioned that the 'country was treacherous'. Moreover, his advice was that India should attack from the left while Kaul stated it had to be from the right. And in any case, Kaul was dead against any action against China for the time being.

A high-level meeting was held to take stock of the situation. Nehru and Menon were both present. After hearing Kaul's assessment that it was not possible to evict the Chinese immediately, Nehru said that it was no use getting the men killed unnecessarily; action could be taken some time later, probably in the 1963 summer.

Thapar asked Nehru specifically if the orders to evict the Chinese had been cancelled. Before Nehru could say anything, Menon intervened: 'Why do you raise this question? This is a matter you can discuss with me.' Thapar said: 'I am addressing my question to my Prime Minister so as to get his exact instructions.' Nehru repeated that it was no use getting the soldiers killed if the Chinese were in a very strong position.

When Thapar asked whether he was to understand that there was no definite date fixed for eviction of the Chinese, Nehru said, 'Yes'.

Thus, the decision to evict the Chinese from their post opposite Dholka was cancelled, and action postponed to the 1963 summer. But no date was fixed. Thapar heaved a sigh of relief and immediately despatched an order to Dalvi that his troops be deployed in a defensive position since no action was contemplated immediately. 'Holding' the positions which India occupied at that time was equally difficult and dangerous.

However, in a letter dated 12 October to Chief Ministers, Nehru said: 'This situation in the North East Frontier is definitely a dangerous one, and it may lead to major conflicts.' He warned that 'as elsewhere, the Chinese have an advantage of lines of communication. They have roads almost right up to the international frontier in Tibet, while our people have to go

through difficult mountain terrain for long distances. The normal altitudes of these places vary from 10,000 to 15,000 feet or more. We have taken steps to strengthen our position and try to push the Chinese out.'

As planned, the Chinese attacked on 20 October 1962, and in about an hour an Indian brigade of about 3,000 men at Dhola was vanquished. Obviously, Dalvi had not stationed his men in a 'defensive position', Thapar told me. 'All the men were bivouacked along the river and they were sitting ducks.' (Indian soldiers were on both sides of the river.)

Dalvi never received any order despite many requests.

By the time Thapar went to meet Menon the Indian post at Dhola had fallen and the Chinese forces were rushing down the hill further into NEFA. Menon had already known about it because one copy of every signal to the Chief of the Army Staff was going directly to the Defence Minister.

Thapar did not indulge in an 'I told you so' attitude. He simply reported what had happened and said, 'Now we must plan what to do next.' Menon, brooding over a cup of black tea, only remarked: 'How could I have known that they would come like an avalanche?'

Thapar told the Defence Minister that Indian forces should now fall back and hold out at the Se-la Pass, about forty miles from Dhola. Menon sarcastically remarked: 'General, why not Bangalore?' They conversed very little after that and waited for the Defence Committee meeting over which Nehru was to preside.

Before the meeting, Malik came to Thapar to apologize for going wrong with his intelligence reports in which he had said that the Chinese were too tied up with the Khampas in Tibet to spare men for the border. The General's reply was that it was the future which was more important.

At the meeting, there were no recriminations over the past. Thapar did not like to rub it in and say that he was proved right. He could see guilt written on all faces. He said he would like to withdraw one division from the Pakistan front.

* * *

Until then Menon's specific instructions were not to move a single soldier from that side. India's assessment since Indepen-

dence had been that it would have to fight Pakistan one day and detailed plans of 'projected action', if ever it became necessary, had been prepared in the Defence Ministry and kept ready. But the border against China had been left unprotected because no hostility was expected in that area.

Even as late as August 1962, a few weeks before the Chinese attack, Menon was talking of Pakistan's preparations against India. Those days, Rajeshwar Dayal, then India's High Commissioner to Pakistan, was in New Delhi. One morning Dayal received a call from the Defence Ministry for a meeting. When he reached the Ministry, he was ushered into a room where Menon was sitting with his Army Commanders, including Thapar.

Hardly had Dayal taken his seat when Menon asked him to tell the Commanders about the preparations that Pakistan was making along the border. Before Dayal could reply, Thapar told him in Punabi (the language of Punjab State) that he should not allow himself to be tripped up because it was a part of a bigger plan.

Dayal said that he knew nothing about the preparations and that he had found no sign of them when he drove across the border on his way to Delhi. Menon was annoyed and asked Dayal to send him a report on his return to Pakistan. He went back and sent in his report only to confirm what he had said in Delhi, that there was no evidence of preparations by Pakistan to attack India.

* * *

Against that background, Thapar had been reluctant to ask for the withdrawal of some troops from the Pakistan front. But now conditions were different. He wanted a division to be withdrawn from the Pakistan front. Nehru immediately conceded to his request.

In fact, after the meeting, the Prime Minister took Thapar aside and told him that 'from now onwards' he should take decisions purely on military considerations.

On the diplomatic front, Nehru exerted his personal influence and wrote to leaders of all friendly countries that 'the present

crisis has not been of the Government of India's making, but has been forced by deliberate aggressive moves made by the Government of China to alter the status quo of the boundary unilaterally by force instead of seeking a solution by talks, discussions and negotiations'.

Maps were also flown to foreign countries to explain 'the line of actual control' because the Chinese propaganda had already created doubts about it.

Also, Nehru requested America, Russia and Britain for small arms. When B. K. Nehru, India's envoy in Washington, went to Kennedy with Nehru's message, the U.S. President—despite his preoccupation with the Cuban missile crisis—was engrossed in studying an Indian map. He had his military and other advisers around him, and Dean Rusk, then Secretary of State, was explaining the NEFA terrain where the fighting between India and China was taking place. Rusk had served in that area during the Burma operations in World War II.

Rusk suggested to B. K. Nehru that India should use its tanks to stall the advance of the Chinese. B. K. Nehru explained that to reach that area from West Bengal, the Army had to take a circuitous route involving a lot of time.

Rusk: 'But why don't you go straight?'

B. K. Nehru: 'That is not possible. Pakistan is in between.'

Rusk: 'Mr Ambassador! You are defending your country, not having a picnic. March your tanks through.'

B. K. Nehru told Kennedy that India required arms urgently. The US President asked: 'Is Krishna Menon still the Defence Minister?' B. K. Nehru replied, 'Yes'.

'Well, that makes things difficult at home', was Kennedy's reply. He also suggested that India should approach Khrushchev and tell him either to 'put up or shut up'.

The US President sent a message to Nehru immediately:

You have displayed an impressive degree of forbearance and patience in dealing with the Chinese. You have put into practice what all great religious teachers have urged and so few of their followers have been able to do. Alas, this teaching seems to be effective only when it is shared by both sides in a dispute....

Kennedy was indeed happy to have received a letter from Nehru who, even though a fallen idol, was still his hero in many ways. His impression was that the letter was exclusive to him but when he came to know that the same letter had gone to other world dignitaries, Kennedy's enthusiasm waned.

But it was not the message of Kennedy but that of Macmillan, then U.K. Prime Minister, which touched Nehru for Macmillan promised all possible help.

Khrushchev struck a different note. He put the blame on the West 'who are interested in intensifying world tension, who wish to line their coats by a military clash between India and China', on 'forces of reaction and war' and 'imperialist circles' who dream in their sleep of ways of disturbing the friendship of the Soviet Union with India and with China....'

Nehru wrote a long and personal letter to Khrushchev to explain not only India's case on the border dispute but to assert that 'the Government of India have never been, and will never be, influenced in any way by the views or attitudes of other Governments. The Government of India are, therefore, surprised at the references to "forces of reaction and war" and 'imperialist circles'.'

Earlier, when Nehru sought the good offices of Moscow through the then USSR Ambassador in Delhi, Ivan Alexandrovich Benediktov, he said he was doubtful if they could do anything at present when their hands were full with the Cuban missile crisis which, according to him, had become rather serious in view of America's 'active interest'.

To Nasser, Nehru wrote that 'friends like you could give advice to the Chinese'. In response, Nasser sent messages to many Asian and African countries including Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Malta and Algeria to use their good offices in bringing about a settlement. He also sent word to Peking. Chou En-lai in reply accused India of having fired the first shot and asked Nasser to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity in view of the American threat of nuclear war starting from the Caribbean sea.

He reiterated the three-point cease fire proposal which China had offered to India on 24 October, four days after the Chinese attacked the Dhola post. The proposal said: One, pending a

peaceful settlement, the armed forces of each side should withdraw 20 kilometres from the 'line of actual control' and disengage. Two, if India agreed to the proposal, the Chinese Government was willing to withdraw its frontier guards in the Eastern sector of the border to the north of the 'line of actual control' and disengage. At the same time, both China and India should undertake not to cross the 'line of actual control', that is the traditional customary line in the middle and western sectors of the border. Three, in order to seek a friendly settlement, talks should be held once again by the Prime Ministers of China and India and for that purpose the Chinese Premier would be ready to go to Delhi.

Meanwhile, Chinese troops cut through the Indian defences like a knife through butter. Post after post fell. Nehru explained to his party men that nobody thought that the Chinese could throw in 30,000 troops. 'This can happen in a totalitarian State but not in a democracy' which had to make every possible saving for welfare purposes, he argued.

But this did not mollify public opinion. Anger against the Government mounted, and criticism of Nehru became louder than ever before, though he was still a god to many people. Some Cabinet Ministers, including Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram, started saying that Nehru had neglected the Sino-Indian border in an effort to have good relations with China. They said it only in whispers—Nehru was too big for them, and they dared not rouse his displeasure.

So they blamed Krishna Menon, Nehru's confidant, who was always considered by the Congress party men as an 'outsider', for the reverses at the front. This gave them the vicarious feeling of hitting Nehru as well as China. ('Why don't you tell your side of the story', I asked Menon once. 'My story must die with me because I would have to lay the blame on Nehru, and I do not want to do so because of my loyalty to him,' he said.)

But Menon was not innocent. He was giving orders on strategy and deployment of forces over the head of Thapar because he would talk to Kaul daily on the telephone.

Nehru changed Menon from Defence to Defence Production but that did not pacify public opinion. Many Congress MPs,

encouraged by Shastri, Desai and some other Central Ministers at that time, kept on piling brushwood around the stake for Menon. It was even argued that since India was getting arms from the West, the person in charge of Defence should be one who had 'faith in the West and had the faith of the West'.

In the wake of all this, Menon submitted his resignation to 'strengthen' Nehru's hands. No doubt, the pressure of the Congress party had an effect on Nehru but what actually made him replace Menon with Chavan, at that time the Maharashtra Chief Minister, was the realization that Menon's retention would keep the controversy alive and divert the nation's attention from the real problem of standing united against the enemy.

The Se-La defence was India's main hope. A well-decorated official, Maj-Gen A. S Pathania, was put in command. But at the very first thrust of the Chinese, he decided to withdraw. (Gen Thapar said that Pathania was a good soldier but he just lost his nerve.) As regards "de'ay" in acceding to his request to withdraw, General Thapar said, "I wanted some time to consider this matter").

Gen. J N. Chaudhuri, the Chief of Army Staff after Gen. Thapar, told me later that it would have been better to withdraw right back to Bomdi-la (90 miles inside India's territory), instead of fighting at Se-la so as to disengage completely and build-up again. However, Gen. Thapar's comment was: 'Our withdrawal from Se-la to Bomdi-la would have involved eventually the evacuation of most of NEFA. The suggestion that we could have subsequently countered and pushed the Chinese back into Tibet, was just, not on with the resources available to us in 1962.' The ill-clothed, ill-shod, ill-trained and ill-equipped Indian soldiers were meeting reverse after reverse. The morale of the troops—and of the nation—was low. The outmoded 303 rifle of the Indian troops were inadequate against the Chinese who were equipped with automatic weapons (Menon told me that the problem was more of training than of equipment. 'I got them two thousand automatic rifles but they were sent to regimental headquarters because the jawans did not know how to handle them').

There was no response from the Soviet Union to India's request for arms. The rumour was that Moscow, which was

waiting to see how far Nehru could resist the demand to remove Menon, had become cooler. In fact, Khrushchev wrote to Nehru to 'negotiate' with China without any pre-conditions—in other words, without asking for the vacation of aggression before agreeing to a cease-fire. This was Peking's line.

France was willing to supply arms on a 'priority basis' but its price was stiff; it wanted cash down payment. Only the USA and Britain were keen to help; they even flew to India some quantity of arms and equipment. But Indian forces were yet to be trained to use them.

Kennedy and Macmillan saw in the Chinese attack an opportunity to put pressure on Nehru to make up with Pakistan. And they did so.

After the division of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan—which hung like two lobes on either ear of the body of India—the two countries had gone so far apart that each relished the other's adversity. It would have been difficult for the Muslim majority country (Pakistan) and the Hindu majority country (India) to settle down as peaceful neighbours because of the hate-campaign that was going on in the two countries, but the accession of Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim majority State ruled by a Hindu Maharaja, to India made things worse.

Over the State, the two countries had had a short war in October-December 1947, Pakistan tried to grab it first through irregular and then regular forces and India repulsed the attack and pushed them back because by then Kashmir had legally acceded to New Delhi. On 1 January 1948, there was a cease-fire through the good offices of the UN. At that time Indian forces controlled roughly three-fourths of the State, including the picturesque vale of Kashmir, and Pakistan one-fourth which it named Azad (independent) Kashmir to spite India.

Since then the situation has remained frozen, even though there have been many UN resolutions, Committee meetings, several visits of Committees and one commission and even a war in September 1965.* New Delhi's case is that Kashmir has legally acceded to India and hence it is its inalienable part; Rawalpindi's contention is that accession was under 'duress' and that

* For details see Chapter I.

India has not fulfilled Nehru's promise to hold a plebiscite to decide the State's future.

To this New Delhi's reply is that plebiscite is only a method to ascertain the people's will and India had done it by holding in the State four general elections through secret ballot in the last two decades, while no free election had ever been held in the Pakistan-held area.

Of the many attempts to find a solution to the Kashmir problem, one was made when Nebru and Ayub Khan, a military commander who had taken over Pakistan's administration after civil rule collapsed because of political squabbles and corruption, met in 1960.

A few days before the meeting, Dayal, then India's envoy to Pakistan, had sounded the Pakistan President Ayub, whom he knew when they had served together as senior officials in a district during British rule, had said that he was quite aware of the fact that it was not possible for any Government in India to give in on Kashmir without being thrown out immediately but the two sides should at least talk.

Dayal told Nehru about it and implored him to take the initiative and broach the subject to Ayub. Nehru did not. And even when Ayub specifically referred to Kashmir during their talks, Nehru just kept quiet. This alienated Ayub from Nehru for all time.

Probably, this abortive meeting was in Nehru's mind when he approached Washington to ensure that Ayub did not march his forces on India when it was fighting China. Not only did Kennedy (as also Macmillan and the Shah of Iran) tell Ayub not to do anything which would in any way distract New Delhi's attention but he also sent his envoy to Peshawar.

America's Ambassador to Pakistan, McCraughy, rushed from Karachi to Rawalpindi to see ... Mohammed Ali, the Foreign Minister, to get an assurance that Pakistan would not embarrass India during the conflict engaged in fighting China.

Mohammed Ali reportedly told the Chinese were greater menace than the Russians and that India should not fear nothing to fear from Pakistan. He, however, said that the Kashmir was out of the question as it could never

foursquare against the common threat from the north. Pakistan's only fear was that if India were to contain China through massive aid from the USA, it might use these arms against Pakistan.

Incidentally, Ali also mentioned to the US Ambassador that India had received no support from even non-aligned countries.

This was no doubt correct. Nehru himself felt let down when one MP, Khadilkar, now Minister of State, asked him in the middle of November 1964—after three weeks of fighting—'What about Nasser?' Nehru said Nasser had proved a disappointment.

Ceylon's Prime Minister, Mrs Bandarnaike, was sympathetic but her advisers were keeping her away from openly taking sides. The Afro-Asian nations were afraid of annoying Peking. Mao had proved that power grew out of the barrel of a gun. India's image was only that of a weak, defeated nation.

Nehru's own Cabinet Ministers openly attacked non-alignment. They said: 'We have no friends. By sermonizing to everybody on what to do or not to do, we have alienated all. And the non-aligned countries are afraid to stand and be counted.'

Things looked gloomy. A good part of NEFA had fallen. The Indian forces were retreating without putting up much resistance. The pall of helplessness was spreading and seemed to have affected even those who had been putting up a brave face. None had any clue to the way things might shape. There was a sense of despair in New Delhi. (Nehru looked the picture of a man seeing all that he had built on the basis of peace with China crumbling. His household reported that he was quieter than usual, keeping his thoughts to himself, often in a reverie.)

The Defence Ministry now asked for all kinds of arms and Nehru just initialled every request and sent it to America, Britain and Russia. One such request was for the assistance of the US Air Force which was to operate from the carriers of the Sixth Fleet, anchored not far from India those days, to provide an umbrella against the Chinese Air Force which, it was feared, would retaliate if the Indian Air Force ever struck. The Defence Ministry's proposal was to use the IAF to bombard the over-stretched Chinese supply line as well as the godowns and petrol dumps behind.

Chester Bowles (with whom I checked on 27 March 1969) told me that Nehru's plan was to use the US planes to protect Indian cities, and to employ the Indian Air Force to attack Chinese territory, particularly Tibet. Nehru, who was reluctant to ask for anything except small arms at the beginning of hostilities, was now desperately looking for all that he could get from any quarter to stem China's lightning advance.

It was at about 9 P.M. when Nehru's letter for massive arms aid and the use of the US Air Force was decoded at the Indian Embassy in Washington. Kennedy by that time had retired. B. K. felt humiliated when he read the message. Still worse was the observation of the White House Special Assistant who on receipt of it said: 'So you couldn't last out even two days Churchill fought the war without any weapons for two years.'

When Bomdi-la fell (19 November 1962) General Thapar was at Tezpur. He flew to Delhi and went straight to Nehru to say that in the best traditions of the Indian Army he as a defeated General would like to submit his resignation. For the first time in many days Thapar saw a smile on the face of Nehru, who held his hand tightly: 'Thank you but this is not your fault'.

However, when Thapar met him the following morning Nehru said: 'General, you remember what you spoke to me last night. I would like to get it in writing'. Thapar came home and got the letter of resignation typed by his daughter and sent it within two hours.

The next day Khera, then Cabinet Secretary, came to Thapar's house and said that the Prime Minister would like the General to go on leave. His reply was that he had no doubt accumulated long leave but he would prefer to resign. Khera asked him to give two letters; one saying that he was resigning and the other asking for leave. Thapar complied. Nehru was anxious to have the General's resignation that very morning because he knew Parliament would be crying for blood on hearing about the fall of Bomdi-la. Thapar was there to be offered as a sacrifice.

Thapar wanted to issue a statement in his defence; he was pilloried from all sides. But Nehru dissuaded him from doing so and assured him that he would one day get an opportunity to tell his side of the story.

Thapar still has his handwritten statement which he hopes will absolve him of his 'guilt' in the Sino-Indian war. The statement narrated how he was pushed into the battle on wrong assurances, without his consent and without any preparation. Later in September 1970 he approached Mrs Gandhi to allow him to see the report of the Australian-born Indian official Lt-Gen. Henderson-Brooks who was appointed to go into the reasons for India's debacle so as to enable him to tell his side of the story. But she did not concede his request.

Lt-Gen. Chaudhuri was appointed to officiate as the Chief of the Army Staff and Thapar given 'sick' leave before he was compulsorily retired. Nehru inquired from Thapar again and again if Chaudhuri was a good choice. Thapar said that as a soldier he was a competent person but as regards the rumours about his conduct when he was Military Governor of Hyderabad following India's police action against the State in 1950, the Prime Minister should satisfy himself.

At midnight on 20-21 November 1962, the Chinese made a unilateral cease-fire offer. The Chinese statement said:

In order to ensure the normal movement of the inhabitants in the Sino-Indian border and to forestall the activities of saboteurs and maintain order there, China will set up check-posts. The check-posts would be at a number of places on its side of the line of actual control with a certain number of civil police assigned to each check-post. The Chinese Government was making these actions to reverse the present situation along the border and to bring about realization of its three-point proposals of 24 October. After withdrawal the Chinese frontier guards will be far behind their positions prior to 8 September 1962.

The Chinese seemed to time their announcements uncannily well. Indeed, in Delhi newsrooms an often-heard comment was that they know the deadlines for the late editions of major Indian newspapers. The 'unilateral withdrawal' announcement, for instance, was preceded about an hour earlier by flashes from news agencies that an 'important announcement' was expected from Peking. The idea seemed to be to time the announcements

early enough to catch the morning editions of Indian newspapers, but late enough to make it difficult for them to carry any reactions New Delhi might wish to get into print.

New Delhi's bureaucracy, on the other hand, seemed blissfully unaware of Press timings. A colleague in *The Statesman* recalls that he got a call from an External Affairs Ministry official after 4 A.M. saying that he wanted to give a statement countering Chinese claims to be published in the morning papers. The official appeared surprised when told that the morning editions of all Delhi newspapers must have rolled off the presses by that time.

None expected the cease-fire, not even the highest in the Government of India. It was only the previous day that Nehru had asked Shastri to go to Assam, which was agitated over the Prime Minister's broadcast that 'my heart goes to the people of Assam at this hour'. The State population interpreted the speech as New Delhi's 'goodbye' to them.

As his Press Officer, I was to accompany Shastri to Assam on the morning of 21 November. When I reached Delhi airport—the courier plane was to fly at 6 A.M.—I found the morning papers carrying the Chinese unilateral cease-fire story prominently. The placement of the story indicated that it landed in newspaper offices after midnight.

Still it was strange that the Home Minister, the Home Secretary and the Director of Intelligence should have been unaware of it—all three came to know of it only from the Press (The Director of Intelligence rang up his office from the airport to check if the news about Peking's offer was correct.) What a way to fight a war!

When Shastri went to Teen Murti to convey the news to Nehru, the Prime Minister remarked in Hindi: 'Has it happened? I was expecting it.' (There was never any doubt that Delhi would accept the cease-fire offer. The Army had been badly mauled and its reputation shattered. The top brass looked desolate and defeated. The rank and file were bitter and openly talked of how with other equipment they had to carry even commodes for the last picket when the fighting was taking place.)

Even the way in which the evacuation of the threatened town of Tezpur was carried out was a dismal story of indiscipline

and confusion. Suddenly one evening announcement was made over loudspeakers that the Government was no longer responsible for the citizens' life or property.

The Deputy Commissioner fled, burning files. Currency notes in the Treasury were burnt. Private cars were requisitioned to evacuate Government officials and Army personnel; vehicles were found to carry even the poultry of the *bura sahib*, but not ordinary people. Prisoners were released; also mental patients. Hospitals were deserted. There was little food, even for children.

General Kaul told Shastri at Tezpur that India must have peace at any cost. The advice of General Thimayya, a retired Chief of the Army Staff who had once submitted his resignation over Menon's 'high handedness and rude behaviour', was: 'One year is necessary to recoup.' Even those who were keen on avenging the defeat were in favour of a cease-fire. The Government had no choice. It accepted the cease-fire without specifically saying so.

The Government sought clarification from the Chinese Embassy in Delhi on 'the line of actual control', a phrase contained in the cease-fire offer. Peking's reply was that Chinese frontier guards, after withdrawing 20 kilometres from the line of actual control, would be far behind their positions prior to 8 September. (But according to the so-called line of actual control claimed by Peking, Chinese troops, even after withdrawing 20 kilometres, would still be south of the line of 8 September in certain places.)

China's reply was that it would withdraw its frontier guards in the eastern sector from Tsayun and Leh villages, and in the western from the Chip Chap Valley, the Galwan River Valley, the Kongka Pass, the Pangong Lake and the Spanggur Lake areas.

This was no 'peace with honour', but there is no honour in defeat. New Delhi was in no position to reject the terms, though later, to save face, it said that it would never hold talks with Peking unless the 8 September positions were restored.

India requested the UAR, which in turn asked Ceylon, to arrange a meeting of non-aligned countries to discuss the Chinese cease-fire proposals. Six Powers—the UAR, Ghana, Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon and Cambodia—met in Colombo on 11 Decem-

ber 1962. They had been briefed by India before the Conference. Behind the scenes, Indian officials, through the UAR, worked hard to retrieve as much of the situation as possible. But the outcome was none too happy. Burma and Indonesia were not willing to put forward any formula which might annoy China.

With great difficulty the UAR and Ceylon were able to get the Conference accept two general principles (known as the Colombo proposals): One, nowhere would Indian troops be required to make any further withdrawals; two, the McMahon Line would be more or less the cease-fire line in the east. (India gave an assurance that it would not take its troops right up to the McMahon Line even though the Conference had allowed it to do so.)

The details were not made public because Peking did not give its response. But later Ceylon, the UAR and China gave India the following clarifications:

Western sector: The withdrawal of Chinese forces proposed by the Colombo Conference will be 20 kilometres from the line of actual control between the two sides as of 7 November 1959.

The demilitarized zone of 20 kilometres created by Chinese military withdrawal will be administered by civilian posts of both sides. This is a substantive part of the Colombo Conference proposals. It is as to the location, the number of posts and their composition that there has to be an agreement between the Government of India and China.

Eastern sector: The Indian forces can, in accordance with the Colombo Conference proposals, move right up to the south of the line of actual control, i.e. the McMahon Line, except for the two areas on which there is difference of opinion between the Governments of India and China. The Chinese forces similarly can move right up to the north of the McMahon Line except for these two areas referred to as the remaining areas in the Colombo Conference proposals, arrangements in regard to which are to be settled between the Governments of India and China according to the Colombo Conference proposals are Chedong or the Thag-la Ridge and the Longju area.

Middle sector: The Colombo Conference desires that the

status quo in this sector should be maintained and neither side should do anything to disturb the status quo.

In the light of the clarifications, New Delhi accepted the Colombo proposals in toto and appealed to China to do likewise. First, Peking did not reply, not even to the queries and letters of the Colombo Conference participants. Later, Chou En-lai told Prince Sihanouk, when he called on him in the middle of February 1963, that he was not happy over the clarifications given to India and that the Colombo Powers had in mind only a stop-gap arrangement, not a settlement.

In March he wrote to Mrs Bandarnaike a seven-page letter, in which he alleged that what he was told in Peking and what was later sent to him in writing on behalf of the Colombo Powers were quite different—there were two sets of clarifications, one given to Delhi and the other to Peking.

His belief was that things were changed in Delhi in deference to Indian pressure; Ceylon had no right to do that. The proposals only outlined principles, they were not an award. Details, he thought, had to be discussed between India and China. (New Delhi was not agreeable to sit across the same table until Peking accepted the proposals in toto.)

Chou En-lai said that Colombo's request that the proposals be accepted in toto meant it was an award. The Conference participants were not arbiters. China would never accept arbitration. Through the same letter Chou En-lai rejected Nehru's offer that the dispute be referred to The Hague Court. (However, by that time, Nehru had resiled from the offer in the face of Parliament's criticism.)

When Nehru found Peking adamant, he said that India would consider negotiations with China on the basis of 'zero parity'—no post by either side. Even then there was no response from Chou En-lai.

India did not take any initiative when Shastri became Prime Minister. However, when he was returning from London, he and Chou En-lai happened to be at Cairo airport at the same time. Nasser was bidding farewell to both. He did ask Shastri if he would like to meet Chou En-lai but Shastri said 'No', knowing the mood of Parliament.

Later in 1965 Shastri stated in the Lok Sabha that India should do some re-thinking on its relationship with China. The entire House protested against the use of the word 're-thinking' in the absence of Peking's acceptance of the Colombo proposals in toto.

For some months after taking over as Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi did not say anything about the Sino-Indian dispute. Her Foreign Minister, M. C Chagla, thought of posting back an Ambassador to Peking. But before the Ambassador could be nominated, officials of the Indian Embassy became victims of the Chinese 'cultural revolution'. The proposal was dropped.

On 5 September 1968, she indicated before the Foreign Correspondents' Association in New Delhi India's interest in resuming a dialogue with China. Again on 1 January 1969, Mrs Gandhi held out an olive branch to China at a Press conference.

On both occasions the reaction was so unsavourable that she had to say subsequently that all that she meant was that India was prepared for talks with China to remove any misunderstanding that New Delhi was being intransigent.

India has always been sensitive to Soviet reaction. Whenever Mrs Gandhi or any important leader in the Government mentioned the possibility of breaking the ice with China, Moscow has felt uneasy. For example, the Russian delegation led by Firyubin, Deputy Foreign Minister, during its visit to New Delhi in September 1968, sarcastically observed that it looked as if Peking and New Delhi were coming together. India's reply was that there was no such likelihood.

Moscow believes that India is not following a steadfast policy towards China and that it might one day leave the Soviet Union high and dry. It knows that there are officials in New Delhi who want to talk to China quietly.

On the other hand, many Indian top officials and leaders believe that Peking's enmity towards New Delhi is born of the latter's over-friendship with Moscow. Their argument is that since China hates the Soviet Union for having become a 'status quo Power', India would do well to project an independent image to mollify Peking.

When the Soviet Union started giving arms to Pakistan, many in India wanted to make up with Peking. Mao Tse-tung's

observation to the Indian Charge d'Affaires, B. C. Mishra, at the May Day reception in 1970 in Peking that India, a great country, and China had been friends and they should have the same old friendship was interpreted as a thaw in the relations.

The Government of India was so excited that it wanted to share the news with the country by making a statement in the Lok Sabha. But the initial enthusiasm waned though not the expectations.

Soon after Mao's words of greeting, the Foreign Office of the Chinese Government got in touch with Mishra to find out India's response. Mishra reportedly said that it was for the Chinese Government to take the initiative and give something in writing.

To this the reported reply of the Chinese Foreign Office was that after Mao's remarks the desire of the Chinese Government was evident; it was for the Government of India to respond with concrete proposals. Mishra pointed out that in the absence of a written communication from the Chinese Government it was difficult for him to take further action. Mishra, who had kept the Indian Government informed about developments, was then called to New Delhi for consultations and an assessment of Peking's intentions.

During his ten-day stay in New Delhi he met Mrs Gandhi, Chavan, Dinesh Singh and others. Mao's remarks were analyzed fully; it was then decided that Mishra should go back to Peking and wait for more positive evidence.

There has been none so far, though every stray smile of a Chinese diplomat for an Indian official in New Delhi or abroad is interpreted as a sign of lessening of hostility on the part of Peking. New Delhi has made at least fifty gestures since the Sino-Indian conflict but all that Peking has done in response is only to employ fewer invectives in the broadcasts and Press writings.

It is obvious that Peking's policy is still what it was when it waged a war against New Delhi in October 1962. It could not allow the Indian experiment of development through democratic methods to be a rival model. China is happy that the growing role of India in the world of the late fifties has now got stalled but it finds that New Delhi still follows the path of 'cooperation' for development and peace, and not 'self-

reliant detachment or confrontation', a basic tenet of Peking's policy.

As long as India is 'a partner in the conspiracy of stability in the world', China has no use for it. Even if an exchange of ambassadors takes place between the two countries, Peking will not take New Delhi seriously for a long time to come, unless India becomes anti-Soviet.

* * *

One effect of the Chinese aggression in 1962 was that many leaders and newspapers in India began veering round to the viewpoint that they should make up with Pakistan. Even during the hostilities, Shastri was of the opinion that New Delhi should talk to Rawalpindi because it was far easier to make up with Pakistan, 'who are our kith and kin', than with China. After the fighting stopped, he put his weight behind it.

Instrumental in arranging a meeting between India and Pakistan were Averell Harriman, the US envoy, and Duncan Sandys, the British representative, who arrived in Delhi the day the Chinese announced a unilateral cease-fire. First, New Delhi was not willing to mention Kashmir specifically in the announcement for talks but later it relented under pressure from the West.

On 30 November 1962, Ayub and Nehru issued a joint statement that a renewed effort should be made to resolve outstanding differences between the two countries 'on Kashmir and other related matters'. A day later Ayub objected to Nehru's observation in the Lok Sabha that to upset the present arrangements regarding Kashmir would be harmful to the future relations between India and Pakistan.

Ayub communicated his complaint to Duncan Sandys who was then in Karachi on his way to London. Sandys immediately returned to Delhi and requested Nehru to issue a clarification. The result was another Nehru statement on 1 December: 'There has never been any question of preconditions or of any restrictions on the scope of the talks which the two friends are initiating.'

Whatever his feelings, Nehru decided to hold talks and nominated Swaran Singh as leader of the Indian team. The government

given to Swaran Singh was that the talks should be continued, not broken and that he should use all his tact and finesse to do so.

While there was no hesitation in discussing Kashmir, India wanted to cover other subjects like illegal immigration of Pakistani Muslims into Assam, and property left by the Hindus when they fled to India after partition. The delegation was specifically told not to accept the demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir.

There was no doubt that Nehru, at the time of the State's accession to India, had promised a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the people after the return of normalcy to Kashmir. But India's contention was that a plebiscite would revive old slogans of 'Muslim Pakistan' versus 'Hindu India' and would cause damage to India's creed of secularism.

At the very first sessions of the Indo-Pakistan Conference at Rawalpindi on December 1962, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Pakistani delegation's leader and then Foreign Minister, repeated the demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir. Swaran Singh spoke of the difficulties in taking such a course. He said that India was a secular State and had therefore to guard against communal riots which might break out once plebiscite supporters were allowed to have a free hand.

He argued that a plebiscite would inevitably lead to an appeal in the name of Islam, and this was not acceptable to secular India. Bhutto at one stage conceded that probably a plebiscite would not be possible and that some other solution be sought. The Indian side deduced that what he meant was some kind of partition of Kashmir although he was reluctant to put that in so many words.

Within a few minutes of the opening of the conference, on an urgent message from President Ayub, the heads of the two delegations went to meet him. He was apologetic and told Swaran Singh that the announcement of Pakistan's accord with China on the Sinkiang border made that morning was not in any way intentional.

Ayub explained that he had given some broad instructions to his Ambassador in Peking. He thought it would take some time for China to indicate its reaction, but instead Peking offered such liberal terms and conceded all Pakistan's points that the Ambassador had no choice but to accept the agreement there and

then. (Bhutto later said in his book that he had timed its announcement with the concurrence of Ayub.)

President Ayub took the opportunity to emphasize that India and Pakistan were dissipating their energies over the Kashmir dispute; in fact, the sub-continent could put its resources to better use. In the conference Swaran Singh repeated the observation of President Ayub. Bhutto also expressed the same sentiment, but he insisted on taking up Kashmir first. India did not object.

Pakistan also added the Farakka Barrage project to the agenda. (India is building the Barrage to utilize the Ganges waters to flush the Hooghly, the river sustaining Calcutta. Heavy silting is making access to the Calcutta port increasingly difficult. Pakistan's contention is that the tail end of the river flowing through its Eastern wing should be assured an adequate supply. What is adequate is a matter of dispute.)

In fact, Rajeshwar Dayal, when he was the High Commissioner to Pakistan in 1958, had warned India that his information was that one day Pakistan would like to share the Ganges waters just as it did the Indus waters. Pant, who had then replied to Dayal since Nehru was out of India those days, had commented that India would never accept that principle. But since then New Delhi has been willing to be liberal in the allocation of river water to Pakistan—but only as a good neighbourly gesture, not as a matter of right.

The first round of talks ended on a note of optimism, and Bhutto, the intractable fiery petrel, on his own observed that Pakistan was at first sceptical but now believed that India was sincere about finding a solution to the Kashmir problem.

India wanted the second meeting to be held in Delhi towards the end of January. But Pakistan wanted a later date. The reason reportedly was that Pakistan wanted America and Britain to take an interest in the talks and to give their own proposals on Kashmir. (Incidentally, the Ambassadors of the USA and the UK stayed in the building where Swaran Singh and Bhutto talked in Rawalpindi.)

Washington's interest was apparent from a Press release which the United States Information Service issued on 20 December in Delhi: 'India's only supply route to Ladakh, where so much

is at stake, runs out of the vale of Kashmir. The old fortress city of Srinagar is a major supply base. For India, the fertile vale is the lifeline to Communist-threatened Ladakh.¹ The statement, however, pointed out that Pakistan also had strong traditional economic, legal and religious ties with the valley and possessed 'the rugged western approaches' to it. 'Thus any settlement of the Kashmir issue as a whole involves an agreement on access to the valley.'

The word 'access' was not defined, but New Delhi believed that what America wanted was that Ladakh be defended by India with a guaranteed passage through the valley. As regards the valley, the USA probably wanted it to go to Pakistan.

Curiously, Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg, who were at the helm of Kashmir when it integrated with India but were later interned for their plans for an independent Kashmir, after their release in 1968, argued on the same lines and said that the border should be 'soft' so that Pakistan had easy access to the valley. Their argument was that trade necessitated such an arrangement.

Nehru received a letter from Macmillan warning him that a breakdown of talks between India and Pakistan would dampen the enthusiasm of the people in Britain to help India because they would have to bear more burdens; they might say India could very easily pull back its forces from the Pakistani front to fight the Chinese.

The second round of Indo-Pakistan talks began in New Delhi in January 1963. Before the talks began, Bhutto met Shastri, then Home Minister, and asked him to make India offer 'something tangible and concrete' on Kashmir. The Pakistan High Commissioner, present at the meeting, complained that the pace of the talks was very slow. Shastri, who expected some outcome at the third round, said, 'You have to carry the people with you in your country, and we in ours'.

Bhutto told Shastri a story circulating in Pakistan that, left to Shastri, he would have a settlement with Pakistan in no time. Bhutto added that the purpose was not to embarrass the Home Minister. Nehru was firmly against making any concession to Pakistan, beyond a minor adjustment of the cease-fire line.

Informally Bhutto had reportedly said that a settlement could

be reached if Pakistan were to get some portion of the valley. Pakistan would like to have Srinagar but would give Pahalgam to India and the way to Ladakh for defence purposes. Bhutto gave the impression that Pakistan might also agree to give Baramula to India.

The Indus Water Commission prepared a map showing the line inside Kashmir, along Rajouri, Poonch and Akhnur. The line, reportedly drawn at the instance of Delhi, made it look as if India were willing to go to the extent of making the watershed of Srinagar and the hills around as the dividing line between India and Pakistan. Rawalpindi, on the other, was said to be favouring Chhamb, near Jammu, as the dividing line.

The talks got stuck on Kashmir. As Swaran Singh introduced 'other related matters' in the discussion Bhutto tried to bring him back to 'the heart of the matter'—Kashmir.

Ultimately, Bhutto informed J. K. Galbraith, then US Ambassador to India and Paul Gore-Booth, at that time the British High Commissioner in Delhi (the pair had come to be known as Laurel & Hardy because Galbraith was tall and Gore-Booth heavy), that no real progress was being made. He suggested that mediation by a third party would help. New Delhi, when sounded, vehemently opposed the proposal and informed both Washington and London that bilateral talks offered the best possibility of a solution, if any.

Before the third round started in Karachi on 8 February, it was clear that Pakistan did not want to press for a plebiscite. Even Ayub told a US correspondent a few days earlier that Pakistan was willing to abandon the plebiscite idea. But Rawalpindi wanted to put the onus of suggesting an alternative on others. The only way out was to divide Kashmir.

New Delhi prepared a paper to suggest that it would agree to such territorial changes as would not violate its geographical, What it really meant

parts of Poonch, Uri and Muzaffarabad to Pakistan in exchange for Kargil and Skardu in north Kashmir which were under Pakistan's occupation.

A slightly modified cease-fire line was not acceptable to Pakis-

tan, which said that India must take into account the religious affiliations of the people and the strategic interests of Pakistan. When spelt out, it meant the entire catchment of the Chenab and the Jhelum rivers as well as the Muslim majority portion of Jammu.

The two sides were poles apart and there was nothing left to announce except the failure of the talks. But at that time, America stepped in to persuade both India and Pakistan to have another round. This time in the joint communique Pakistan insisted on avoiding the words 'other related matters' and on substituting them with 'various aspects relevant to the settlement of the Kashmir problem'. If words could satisfy Rawalpindi, New Delhi had no objection. But by this time India was clear in its mind that prolonging the talks would serve no purpose.

What Swaran Singh had ignored on the opening of the talks in Rawalpindi—Pakistan's settlement with China on the border—was reopened at the very start of the fourth and the last round in Calcutta on 13 March. Pakistan was now on the defensive and said its border agreement was provisional and as such it did not come in the way.

When pressed further Bhutto said that it involved no transfer of territory to China. India argued that its conflict with China had made Peking take the initiative and clinch a settlement with Rawalpindi. Bhutto refuted it and said Pakistan's negotiations with China started in 1961, much before the Sino-Indian conflict.

Galbraith and Gore-Booth, however, who were in Calcutta on behalf of their Governments, tried their best to retrieve the situation. They offered no concrete proposal except their good offices and they worked very hard at private meetings to keep the talks going. But they knew that there was no common ground between New Delhi and Rawalpindi.

However, the pretence of talks was kept up for another two rounds in April and May. Both sides went over the same ground again and again. Their differences were so basic—Pakistan wanting practically the whole of Jammu and Kashmir except for a district and a half of Jammu and India willing to settle on the cease-fire line—that Western Powers' argument about the economic advantages of a rapprochement did not cut any ice.

America was putting all the pressure on India. The State Department told B. K. Nehru that it was not possible to get Congress approval for assistance to face the Chinese until there was a solution on Kashmir.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union felt let down first when Nehru and Ayub issued a joint statement before the beginning of the talks and then when it learnt that during the Swaran Singh-Bhutto talks India had offered 3,700 square miles to Pakistan and accepted even the modified cease-fire line as a permanent boundary in Kashmir.

Moscow informed New Delhi that it was not in favour of raking up the subject of Kashmir every now and then; Khrushchev told Nehru that even though Pakistan had expressed its readiness to quit SEATO and CENTO provided Moscow helped Rawalpindi on Kashmir, he had not encouraged Ayub.

The Soviet leaders made it clear that they strongly opposed the suggestion of an independent Kashmir which to them would become 'a hotbed of Western spies and reactionaries'. The idea of an independent Kashmir had been given to Sheikh Abdullah by Adlai Stevenson when he visited Kashmir in the early fifties. The Sheikh was then heading the State Government.

* * *

To some extent, India's own effort to make up with Pakistan and to a large extent the overfriendliness of China as well as America with Pakistan made Moscow revise its policy towards Rawalpindi. But the post-Stalin leadership also changed its policy of having no truck with those countries with which they had little or no political sympathy.

Ayub who had vainly tried to visit Moscow for a long time received the invitation in early 1965. New Delhi was worried. However, Shastri who went to Moscow soon after Ayub was assured that Russia was only trying to wean Pakistan away from the CENTO and SEATO military pacts, it was trying to do the same thing with Iran and Turkey. Kosygin said that by 'retrieving Pakistan from the influence of America and China' the Soviet Union was in fact helping India, because, as a friend, it would try to persuade Pakistan to make up with India.

Shastri was specifically told that Soviet support to India on Kashmir would continue. Later, Moscow changed its position when it stopped saying or publishing anything which could hurt Pakistan's susceptibilities. The Soviet leaders began avoiding public declarations on Kashmir lest they should in any way spoil their relations with Pakistan.

In September 1968, Bali Ram Bhagat, then Foreign Minister of State, specifically asked Firyubin, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, who was in New Delhi leading a Soviet delegation for bilateral talks with India, if the Soviet Union had changed its stand on Kashmir. Firyubin evaded the question and said that they were in favour of direct talks between India and Pakistan.

Subsequently, in a letter to Mrs Gandhi, Kosygin referred to Kashmir as one of the problems to be settled between India and Pakistan. It was strange that Moscow, which had been repeating since 1955 that Kashmir was an integral part of India, should have used the word 'problem'.

Moscow's explanation has been that the Soviet Government's relationship with India is more 'mature and frank' and therefore it can afford to take liberties which in the long run would help India. But probably the real reason is that the Soviet leaders had more confidence in socialist Nehru than in his successors.

They are convinced that India is essentially a bourgeois country with only one difference: New Delhi is not a member of any military pact and hence more non-aligned than Rawalpindi; but both are following the same capitalist path of development, and, viewed from the point of orthodox Communist ideology, there is nothing to choose between the two.

When a joint statement was issued at the end of Shastri's visit to the Soviet Union (May 1965) a subtle difference was sought to be made between non-alignment as a political stance and as an economic philosophy. Non-alignment was interpreted as having the 'noble goals of preventing war and consolidating peace, easing world tensions and developing international cooperation' and the economic philosophy was that the people had a right 'to choose and develop the political, economic and social systems which they consider best suited to their aspirations'.

Those days a Russian journal, *Voprosy Filosofii*, attacked the

monopolies and confiscating or nationalizing feudal estates and capitalistic enterprises. He said that the Soviet Union had 'established close, friendly relations with the young countries steering a course towards socialism. And as if it was a passing reference, he mentioned that the 'CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet Government' were paying attention to 'improving relations with such major Asian countries as India and Pakistan which can virtually be considered our neighbours as well'.

As regards the ruling Congress party in India, the Soviet Union had its doubts. In an article on India's impending elections in 1967, the Soviet journal *New Times* said that the prestige and influence of the Congress party had declined considerably. The main reason attributed for the decline was that the 'capitalist' path of development, which India has followed since liberation has not improved the lot of the people'. It quoted Congressmen as having said that India was receding from socialism.

Later when the banks were nationalized, the Soviet Press and Radio went all out to support Mrs Gandhi—even in the Supreme Court's rejection of the original Banks Nationalization Act, the Government-run Moscow Radio saw the hand of the Rightists.

Parliament felt unhappy over Soviet 'interference' in India's internal matters and the Government half-heartedly took up the matter with Russia which promised to be more careful in its pronouncements over Moscow Radio. The Indian Government* was however told that Russia's Radio Peace and Progress, which abused Indian personalities and parties, was an unofficial one.

When the Congress party split, Moscow through its Press and Radio hailed Mrs Gandhi as the leader of the 'progressive forces'. And when in Delhi in 1969 Kosygin told the two factions of the Communist party, which had split over the strategy of making India Communist, to sink their differences and work unitedly behind Mrs Gandhi. He even invited to Moscow some leaders of the Left Communist faction but they did not go, suspecting foul play.

*The Government had earlier (September 1969) agreed to news-exchange between the Soviet agency, APN (Novosti) and the Press Information Bureau of the Government of India. New Delhi was really hustled into it because an ebullient official had on his own accepted the deal when he was in Moscow.

To get still closer to New Delhi which was now looking 'more and more progressive' Moscow assured President Giri when he visited the Soviet Union in September 1970 that it had stopped supplying arms to Pakistan.

The supply of arms did at one time result in turning the relationship sour. New Delhi started bearing of it directly or indirectly from late 1966. The Soviet reply, clear and definite, to India's frequent queries was that no military equipment was being sold to Pakistan.

The assurances given on various occasions were : First, after the visit of Sbarifuddin Pirzada, then Pakistan Foreign Minister, to Moscow on 17 May, Firyubin, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, told Kewal Singh, then India's envoy to the USSR: 'I can assure you that we are not supplying any arms to Pakistan. Of course you know that we help you in a big way not only by supplying arms but also by helping in your defence production'.

The assessment of Kewal Singh reported to Delhi was that while the question of supplying of arms to Pakistan might very well have been revised at the discussions, no commitment was made by the Soviet Government on this subject and Pirzada's efforts had therefore been mainly directed at representing strongly against Soviet military assistance to India.

Secondly, on Soviet arms aid to Iran Gromyko, then Soviet Foreign Minister, assured Kewal Singh that, according to the arrangements made with the Iranian Government, there was no possibility of Soviet arms being diverted to Pakistan or being used against India.

Gromyko added that in fact before giving aid to Iran they seriously considered the possible reaction in India. This, he said, was true of all their policies relating to South Asia and Southeast Asia. They invariably gave very careful thought as to whether such policies would in any way cause any misunderstanding or concern in India. Gromyko concluded by saying that—'the Soviet Union will not do anything which would cast the slightest shadow on our friendship'.

Thirdly, in August 1967, when the sale of some Mi-6 helicopters to Pakistan was published in the foreign Press, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Vinogradov, told Kewal Singh: 'This deal has no military or political significance whatsoever. The USSR

has a stronger feeling of friendship for India and the sale of these civil aircraft should not cause the slightest misunderstanding or doubt. In regard to personnel to be trained for this helicopter the purchasing country has the right to depute any personnel for training.'

He also said that civil supplies from buttons to aircraft could be used for some military purpose and one could not impose conditions on such transactions.

Subsequently, Moscow gave New Delhi a list of 'some non-combative weapons' supplied to Rawalpindi. And, for information, India was told how a Pakistani delegation, during its visit to Moscow in early 1968, handed to the Soviet Union a complete list of armaments, including spare parts, Russia had supplied to India.

New Delhi really got perturbed when following the visit of General Yahya Khan, then Pakistan's Commander-in-Chief, to Moscow (28 June to 7 July 1968) the Soviet Union, through its Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi, officially told India that it had decided to supply arms to Pakistan. The letter was accompanied by an aide-memoire from the Soviet Foreign Office—making an appeal for understanding in the name of the 'strong and long standing' ties between Moscow and New Delhi.

Late in the evening in July (1968) Rajeshwar Dayal, then Foreign Secretary, brought the Soviet communication to Mrs Gandhi. She was worried how it would affect her position as Prime Minister. She told Dayal to convene a Cabinet meeting immediately. That was a Saturday and almost all important Ministers were out of town. Morarji Desai, whose reaction Mrs Gandhi was particular to know, was away in Lucknow.

Dayal asked Mrs Gandhi if he should talk to Dinesh Singh, then Commerce Minister, who only a few days earlier had been in Moscow on his way back from Yugoslavia and had obtained a first-hand account of the arms supply to Pakistan. She said he could meet Dinesh Singh then and there; he must be on the verandah, she said.

Dayal joined Dinesh Singh there and the Minister's suggestion to Dayal was that the Indian President's scheduled visit to the Soviet Union a few days later should be cancelled. Dayal explained to him the likely repercussions of such a step.

The Government decided to leak out the story to the Press to build up public opinion against Moscow's proposed military supply. Mrs Gandhi also talked to leading newspaper editors to seek their cooperation for a 'national cause'.

She wrote to Kosygin on 10 July 1968 to express India's grave concern and to point out the possible consequences and dangers of the Soviet decision.

Kosygin's reply was prompt; he assured Mrs Gandhi that his Government would do nothing to undermine its very close and cordial relations with India. He made no direct reference to the reported Soviet decision to extend arms aid to Pakistan, but he said that even if Moscow decided to give some military hardware to Pakistan, it would be done only in the larger interest of preserving peace in the region.

Later, in September 1968, when a Soviet team led by Firyubin was in Delhi, the same assurances were repeated. Russia, however, promised that it would not give missiles to Pakistan. But this was a false assurance.

The Defence Ministry's assessment was that, besides spare parts for the tanks and MiGs Pakistan had bought from China, Moscow had promised to give Rawalpindi ground-to-air missiles some time in the future. A note the Defence Ministry then sent to Indian missions abroad, with the policy directions of the External Affairs Ministry, reportedly said missiles formed part of the proposed supplies.

The Indian Press and public opinion were greatly incensed, particularly when the Soviet Union's assurance that it would never allow its arms to be used against India rang a familiar bell—the USA had said the same thing when it started arming Pakistan, but 1965 had proved how false that promise was.

Unofficially, all Ministers were in favour of denouncing the Russian decision and supporting an Opposition's resolution to condemn the arms supply. But Mrs Gandhi pointed out that there was no Parliament resolution when the US supplied arms to Pakistan. Swaran Singh, then Defence Minister, brought round all by arguing whether it was politic to condemn Russia when India was so dependent on it for arms, trade and heavy machinery.

This was the same kind of argument which he had used in the Cabinet when Morarji Desai and Ram Subhag Singh, then Indian

Ministers, wanted to condemn through a Parliament resolution the Soviet Union's attack on Czechoslovakia* in August 1968. Mrs Gandhi wanted to express only 'regret' over the Soviet action and she had her way. Swaran Singh helped her by arguing in the Cabinet that by condemning the Soviet Union, India would unnecessarily endanger its military supplies from the USSR.

Asoka Mehta, then Minister for Petroleum, did not say anything in the Cabinet when Mrs Gandhi's statement avoiding the phrase 'condemnation' was finalized. But he resigned a day later. The failure of devaluation which he had advocated had devalued him, and he was looking for only an opportunity to quit.

For fear of annoying Moscow, India abstained from voting on the seven-member resolution on Czechoslovakia in the Security Council. When G. Parthasarathy, then India's Permanent Representative at the UN, telephoned from New York for final instructions, the Cabinet meeting was just over. Mrs Gandhi told him to abstain if the resolution was put to the vote with the word 'condemn'. And he did so. This disappointed people in India and abroad.

Therefore, later, Mrs Gandhi allowed the Indian Parliament to pass what she considered an 'innocuous' resolution, which said: 'This House hails the brave people of Czechoslovakia in their bid to liberalize and democratize the political life of the country, reiterates its faith in the policy of non-involvement and non-interference in the internal affairs of the country and appeals to all freedom-loving countries and peoples to extend their support and sympathy to the movement in Czechoslovakia.' Excepting the Czechoslovak National Assembly, the Indian Parliament was the only legislature in the world to come down so strongly against Soviet aggression.

The non-condemnation of the Soviet Union did please Moscow. India utilized the opportunity to get more sophisticated weapons from Russia. Delhi was not only successful in securing

* On the day Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops entered Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Charge d'Affaires knocked at the door of the Prime Minister's Secretary, Haksar, at 4 A.M. A surprised Haksar was told about the development. The early morning Soviet caller sought an immediate meeting with the Prime Minister. This was arranged while the street lights were still on.

them but also in obtaining five submarines—the Indian Navy had never had submarines before.

Not only did the Government not support the Opposition's resolution in Parliament to condemn the Soviet Union but also advised its foreign missions to guard against expressing any unfavourable reaction to the Soviet Union. This surprised even Moscow—as was known later, it had expected a stronger reaction in India.

* * *

Moscow's post-Khrushchev policy of befriending Rawalpindi encouraged Pakistan to flex its muscles. Russia had not yet given it arms but the very fact that the Soviet Union had welcomed the Pakistani leaders in Moscow made Rawalpindi believe that if it ever came to a fight between Pakistan and India, the USSR would keep aloof.

On the undemarcated border on the western (Gujerat) side, in the area known as the Rann of Kutch (which remains under water from May to November) Pakistani forces intruded in the first week of April 1965 and established two posts. Later, they clashed with the Indian police in the Kanjarkot area. New Delhi replaced the border police with troops.

Logistics favoured Pakistan because it had an airport at Badin near the border. Rawalpindi deployed a complete infantry division, one regiment each of medium and light tanks including some US Patton tanks, and some other para-military units. Pakistan also brought two squadrons of US F-86 fighter bombers to the nearby airport.

New Delhi lodged a protest with Washington against the use of American arms obtained by Pakistan through the US military aid programme. (When the US had supplied arms to Pakistan in 1954 in a bid 'to contain Communism', Eisenhower,* then US President had said in a personal note to Nehru: 'What we are proposing to do and what Pakistan is agreeing to is not directed in any way against India and I am confirming publicly that

*Later when Nehru met Eisenhower, the US President offered to supply India the same quantity of arms America had done in the case of Pakistan. Nehru refused to get involved in the arms race.

Pakistan received US arms worth \$2 billion (£ 909 million)

if our aid to any country, including Pakistan, is misused and directed against another in aggression I will undertake immediately in accordance with my constitutional authority appropriate action both within and without the UN to thwart such aggression.'

Philip Talbot, then US Assistant Secretary of State, assured B. K. Nehru that Pakistan could use the arms* only against Communist aggression. On India producing a picture of Patton tanks on the Kutch border, Washington asked Rawalpindi to allow American observers to visit the site of the hostilities. Ayub's reply was that Pakistan was entitled to use all arms to defend its territory.

However, at a garden party in Karachi a few days later, Ayub told Walter McConaughty, then US Ambassador to Pakistan: 'You can send a military observer any time. We have nothing to hide.'

'Should we send our request through the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army?' asked McConaughty. Ayub beckoned a Brigadier who was standing nearby and asked him to provide every assistance to the American envoy.

When McConaughty began to say: 'If you have any reservations on this....' Ayub cut him short and said: 'No, we have no reservations.' Washington did find that the Pakistani brigade in the Rann had been equipped partly by the American military group.

Had America been firm at that time and insisted on Pakistan not using US arms against India, the subsequent war between India and Pakistan might have been averted.

Since the tension in the Kutch area was mounting, Pakistan ordered on 24 April general mobilization of its armed forces. This was denied, but it was an open-secret that all military leave had been cancelled and orders issued to recall reservists. India also put its armed forces on the alert. Both Shastri and Ayub indulged in sabre rattling and talked in terms of total war.

India claimed that Kanjarkot, Chhadbed and Birabet in Kutch had always belonged to it but Pakistan said that the Rann was a disputed area and even according to international law the

*An American Colonel, then serving in Pakistan, made a public statement that he and his colleagues knew that tanks were being painted battle grey.

boundary must run through the middle of the Rann.

Rawalpindi, advantageously placed as it was in that area, was able to consolidate its position around Birabet after a few skirmishes. The Indian Government wanted to go all out to retrieve the area but the Army Chief was against it. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh, then only an articulate MP, chided one day General Chaudhuri: 'You Bengalis are probably afraid to fight. We Biharis will.' General Chaudhuri gave him the machine-gun lying in the room, but Dr Singh found it difficult to carry. (Later, it was realized that the Kutch operation was a diversionary attack meant to pin down Indian forces there.)

At a Cabinet meeting he said he could not reconcile himself to a war between India and Pakistan. Therefore, when Britain suggested a cease-fire, New Delhi readily agreed even though some of the territory India claimed remained under Rawalpindi.

Around that time (5 May 1965), General Chaudhuri said.* 'He discussed with Shastri and Chavan the pros and cons of attacking Pakistan if it ever invaded Kashmir' and 'obtained the necessary sanction'. And 'consequently we had plenty of time to work out the appropriate moves'.

The cease-fire in Kutch was shortlived. On 15 June the two sides clashed again. Britain was once again able to get the guns silenced. This time (30 June 1965) a cease-fire agreement was signed on the condition that the two sides would restore the position as prevailing on 1 June and refer the dispute to a tribunal with three members, one each appointed by India and Pakistan and the third acceptable to them, in case they failed to agree upon the third person within three months, then the UN Secretary-General would nominate him.

Wilson, then British Prime Minister, used all his tact and pressure on Shastri, who was then in London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference and who was staying in the same hotel where Ayub was, to agree to arbitration. It was a great concession for India to accept that the Rann of Kutch was disputed territory and that a third party should give an award †

*Talk with the author on 15 January 1971 in New Delhi.

†The award, announced on 18 February 1968, did not uphold India's claim to the entire Rann of Kutch. Out of 3,500 square miles, 300 square miles were given to Pakistan.

It was obvious that Shastri did not want to go to war with Pakistan. He felt that it would spell disaster for the sub-continent. In fact, he repeated the offer of a no-war pact to Pakistan —which Nehru had done before. But Pakistan rejected the offer.

Shastri seemed to have exhausted the entire fund of goodwill for Pakistan during those days. He explained to me later: 'Pakistan mistook my desire not to fight as a sign of weakness; it thought that I will never go to war and it tried to take undue advantage in Kashmir. When it did so, I was convinced that Pakistan was not serious about good relations and peace with India. I decided to act.'

The Rann of Kutch was an exercise for a bigger operation. Sidney F. Giffin in his book *The Crisis Game* has mentioned a war 'game' which was played by the Institute of Defence Analysis in Washington some time between 30 December 1964 and March 1965.

Giffin wrote:

"Peking in the winter of 1966 informed Pakistan of its intention 'to eject interlopers from the South of China', commencing with favourable summer weather, and suggested that the consequent probable diversion of Indian military forces should offer a favourable opportunity for Pakistan to assume its 'rightful control' over Kashmir. Pakistan responded by expressing concern over the position of East Pakistan, vulnerable as it was to a surrounding India and to internal Hindu subversion, should Pakistan make any offensive move to the Kashmir area. Peking, with unconcealed contempt for Indian military capabilities, assured Lahore that Chinese forces would be poised as to counter Indian threats to East Pakistan. Agreement on mutual support for military operations to achieve Pakistani occupation of Kashmir and Chinese occupation of all Himalayan border claims was thereafter reached, the target date being September 1, 1966."

"Pakistan commenced a series of complaints respecting 'aggressive Indian incursions' across the cease-fire line in Kashmir. U.N. truce teams in the area were unable to confirm such Indian incursions. On August 30, all communications from truce teams on the Pakistani side of the cease-fire line broke off (the teams having been taken into protective custody by the Pakistani Army). Early on 31 August, Pakistani forces, which had been moving up

nocturnally for the purpose, crossed the cease-fire line in Kashmir. Indian troops were driven back, truce teams on their side of the cease-fire line moving with them and reporting back to the United Nations firm evidence of a Pakistani violation of the truce."

Hardly had the ink on the Kutch cease-fire agreement dried when incidents on the Kashmir border increased (almost 300 per month). There were vague intelligence reports that Pakistan was training infiltrators to be sent into Kashmir. Each report was different from the other and therefore it was difficult to gauge the scope or nature of Pakistan's preparations. But it was apparent that something serious was brewing across the border.

A top-level meeting of military officials, where India's Chief of the Army Staff was present, was held at Srinagar on 2 August to study the situation but, surprisingly, the conclusion reached was that Pakistan posed no immediate threat.

Two days later, the Army authorities received evidence of infiltration from Pakistan. The police informed them that a youngster, Mohammed Din, had reported that while tending his cattle near Gulmatg, 40 miles north of Srinagar, two armed strangers wearing green *salwar* (sort of trousers) and *kameez* (shirt) approached him and offered him Rs 400 (£ 22*1*) if he could obtain for them some information they wanted. In another area (Mendhar sector, Jammu), a few suspicious-looking armed men had contacted Wazir Mohammed and promised to give him money. Both men, pretending to comply with the request, had reported the matter to the authorities.

The Army immediately sent patrols which encountered some raiders who, after some resistance, fled back across the cease-fire line. Three days later, on 8 August, two Pakistani officers, Captains Ghulam Hussain and Mohammed Sajjad, were captured and during interrogation they admitted that infiltration on a large scale was planned. They disclosed that they were the leading elements of Pakistani forces planning to seize Jammu and Kashmir by force. This was corroborated by information gleaned from documents found in their possession.

The documents also revealed that the plan for massive infiltration was hatched as early as January 1965. At that time through a Presidential Ordinance a Mujahid (volunteers for a

holy war) force was formally constituted, and the training of this force began in May 1965, under the overall direction of Major-General Akhtar Malik, then General Officer Commanding, 12th Infantry Battalion.

According to the infiltration plans, the raiders were to enter the State in small groups between 1 and 5 August, concentrate at central points and then converge on the valley from various directions; the raiders expected to mingle unnoticed with the thousands of people congregating to celebrate the festival of Pir Dastagir Sahib on 8 August.

On the following day, which coincided with the anniversary of the first arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, the raiders were to join a demonstration scheduled in Srinagar for the day, stage an armed revolt and in the process capture the radio station, airfield and other vital centres. A few other columns of infiltrators were to cut roads connecting Srinagar with other parts of the State so as to isolate the capital.

Subsequently, the raiders were to form a 'revolutionary council', proclaim itself as a lawful government and broadcast an appeal for recognition and assistance from all countries, especially Pakistan. (A copy of the proclamation of the 'war of liberation' intended for broadcasting over Radio Kashmir on 9 August was found later.) The 'broadcast' was to be the signal for Pakistan to move in for the kill.

The early detection of infiltrators only accentuated the pace of events. There was a spate of serious incursions throughout Jammu and Kashmir, all aimed at capturing the valley. It appeared that the raiders had been assigned special jobs like destruction of bridges, disruption of lines of communication, attacks on military formations and distribution of arms and ammunition to local civilian sympathizers.

The invaders set about their task with missionary zeal and they were confident of spontaneous response from the masses whom they had come to 'liberate'. But the local population kept itself aloof. (Commenting on the lack of response among the Kashmiris, Ayub told an American journalist many months later that it was Bhutto who made him trust them and made him go wrong on his assessment of 'their characteristics').

On 8 August the infiltrators managed to enter one of the su-

burbs of Srinagar. The State Government became so panicky that it suggested to Delhi to impose martial law in the State. Accordingly, the Central Government asked the Army to take control of the entire State. The Army Commanders, however, dissuaded the Government from doing so and assured them that the situation was not as bad as was depicted by the State Government.

On the 8-9 night, for the first time, the whole of the cease-fire line burst into flame with intensive and continuous fire across the border. In the Poonch area Pakistan shelled selected targets with 25-pounder guns. The infiltrators—roughly 3,000 in the State—made a daring raid on Brigade Headquarters but there were no casualties.

And Pakistan, through the Press and radio, was at great pains to explain that the happenings in Jammu and Kashmir were 'a spontaneous local insurrection' in which it had no hand.

During the 9-10 night there was a comparative lull in the valley. That very night some infiltrators were fired upon as they were trying to slip back into Pakistan. This was the first indication of infiltrator traffic in the reverse direction.

Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh, Chief of Western Command, described Srinagar thus. 'The streets were deserted and there were visible signs of anxiety and tension on the faces of the residents gaping through the windows.'

On the 12-13 night Srinagar was still ringing with intermittent firing throughout the city. The cease-fire line was also kept ablaze by Pakistan and in the Poonch sector an ammunition dump was almost on the point of falling into the infiltrators' hands when Indian troops with artillery support stepped into the breach and drove them away.

Once the infiltrators met with resistance, they withdrew. The operation failed. Gen. Harbaksh Singh said in his report to the Government:

The Pakistanis borrowed a leaf from the teachings of Mao Tse-tung in their plan for instigating an insurrection in J & K under the guise of a spontaneous 'Liberation Movement'. But it was in the implementation of the Chinese doctrine on the subject that Pakistani leadership faulted

and fell. To succeed in this form of subversive warfare, it requires meticulous organization, detailed planning, a high standard of training, aggressive leadership and universal local support. Without these basic essentials a liberation movement is bound to fizzle out—as it did in J & K.

On 14-15 August, Gen. Harbaksh Singh, after getting New Delhi's permission through a hurried telephone call, captured two Pakistani posts—Point 13620 and Saddle—overlooking mountainous Kargil. The posts posed a threat to the line of communication in that sector.

The occupation of the two posts did not satisfy Indian Parliament members; they wanted the Government to chase the infiltrators across the cease-fire line. Chavan promised (23 August) to the Lok Sabha that they would do so 'if necessary'.

In fact, that necessity arose a few days later—on 25 August—Indian forces crossed the cease-fire line in the Uri sector to prevent concentration of infiltrators in that area.

The Pakistani forces which had been making inroads into the Chhamb sector in Jammu since 5 August now attacked from the Gilgit side. The attack made on 28 August was near Gurez, one of the gateways from the north to the Kashmir valley. The Pakistani forces were repulsed.

In the Uri Sector, Indian forces continued their advance and penetrated up to Haji Pir, a strategic mountain pass at a height of 8,600 feet which the infiltrators used as one of the main points of ingress. (Haji Pir is the nerve centre of Pakistan's road communication for the entire area.) Earlier Indian forces had occupied heights overlooking Tithwal, another dominant feature.

With the capture of Haji Pir the routes of infiltrators and the Pakistan Army were plugged. However, Rawalpindi described India's gain as an attempt to 'rehabilitate their sagging morale because the world knows their debacle in Kutch'.

Meanwhile, New Delhi increased its diplomatic activity to whip up opinion against infiltration from Pakistan. B.K. Nehru met Dean Rusk, and explained—as other Indian envoys did to leaders of the countries to which they were accredited—that Pakistani Army officers were leading 'massive infiltration' and causing violations of the cease-fire line.

Rawalpindi explained that no Pakistani soldier was involved. Kewal Singh, then Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, met Bhutto, then Foreign Minister, who said it was only an 'uprising' in Jammu and Kashmir.

The UN Secretary General, to whom India complained, described the situation as 'a dangerous threat to peace' but did nothing beyond summoning for consultations Lt-Gen R.H. Nimmo, head of the UN military observers' group in Kashmir. His interpretation was that the cease-fire agreement applied only to armed forces on either side and not to civilians, armed or unarmed. However, in his report on 5 August, he did confirm the crossing of the cease-fire line by Pakistani armed infiltrators in an attempt to destroy strategic points of communication.

While *Pravda* said on 24 August, in an editorial signed by 'Observer', that Kashmir was 'an integral part of India' and hoped that a settlement of the present situation in Kashmir would be brought about peacefully between India and Pakistan, Kosygin wrote to Shastri on 4 September that 'the rights and wrongs of the present situation were hardly of any importance at the moment....The main efforts should be concentrated on the immediate termination of military operations and stop tanks and silence the guns'. His letter was not at all pro-Indian and it equated New Delhi with Rawalpindi for playing into the hands of 'American imperialism'.

Shastri was now on the side of the hawks who said that Pakistan must be taught a lesson. Rawalpindi launched a heavy attack* on 1 September in the Akhour-Jammu sector by crossing

*General Chaudhuri's version however is: 'After 5 May 1965, I was working out the appropriate moves to attack Pakistan if and when it attacked Kashmir. The day Pakistan moved her regular troops, infantry and armour into the Jammu Sector, I was in Kashmir. As I was coming back in the plane to Delhi, the Director of Military Operations who was in the aircraft with me started writing out the required signals to go to the formations concerned. On landing he went straight off to send them out and I immediately went to see the Defence Minister who formally confirmed my action. He then informed the Prime Minister and that evening the PM asked me to see him, discussed a few details and further approved the action taken. The PM might also have informed some of his close colleagues but this was not my concern.'

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must be taught a lesson. Pemaquid launched a heavy air
attack on 1 September in the Afognak Islands; another is expected.

the cease-fire line and a small portion of the international border. This made up Shastri's mind.

Two days later—3 September—Shastri ordered the Indian Army to march into Pakistan. The actual attack came on 6 September. It would have come a day earlier but the Indian Air Force wanted to pound the 'enemy' bases first; it hardly did so. In fact, the Pakistan Air Force attacked the Pathankot airport on the 6th afternoon and destroyed thirteen Indian planes.

After the war, I asked Shastri who gave the actual orders to cross the international boundary. 'I did', he said. 'Chaudhuri [Chief of the Army Staff] and others were taken aback when I asked them to march into Pakistan.' Gen. Harbaksh Singh told me that the Army could never forget 'this tallest decision by the shortest man'. (Shastri was about five feet tall.)

In 1966, a few days before Nehru's birth anniversary (14 November) when I met Mrs Gandhi for a press interview I inquired from her: 'Who took the decision to march into Pakistan?'

'We, the Cabinet Committee on Defence,* did when the Army Commanders told us that it was necessary to engage Pakistan forces elsewhere to relieve pressure on Jammu and Kashmir.'

'What would your father have done in a similar situation?'

'Shastriji accepted the advice of the Army Commanders; my father would have done the same thing', Mrs Gandhi said.

Some critics think that Shastri, who was 'diminutive physically and otherwise', wanted to do something to add to his stature and, therefore, he went to war with Pakistan. It is true that action against Pakistan made him a hero; before the war one sometimes heard titters from the audience at cinema halls as his picture appeared on the screen but never after the action against Pakistan.

This can only be malicious, for Shastri had very little choice. Indian troops were greatly outnumbered and out-positioned in the Chhamb sector and the Poonch-Rajouri Road and the Jammu-Srinagar road. The only link with the valley was threatened. If the road was cut off all Indian forces in Jammu and

*Mrs Gandhi was a member of the Committee.

Kashmir would have been isolated: Indian units were operating in difficult terrain in that area and could use light tanks only while Pakistan was able to move in the heaviest tanks.

'I want to reach Lahore before they take Srinagar,' Shastri told General Chaudhuri.

Plans to attack Pakistan were already there because at the time of the Kutch confrontation the two countries had almost reached the point of war. In fact, a few days earlier, Gen Chaudhuri had told Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh that India should be ready to attack Pakistan across the international border within 48 hours of a new challenge. This was exactly what happened.

Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh had made it clear that India must move towards Pakistan if it ever 'marched' on Kashmir. Therefore, when Chhamb was attacked—and in the process Pakistan crossed nearly a quarter of a mile of the international border—he repeated Nehru's warning that any attack on Kashmir was an attack on India. Harbaksh Singh's argument was weighty, particularly when it was difficult to hold Kashmir the way Pakistani forces were advancing in the Chhamb sector.

'Operation Riddle' was the code word for the attack fixed for 4 o'clock on the 6th morning. A three-pronged thrust was mounted from Amritsar, Ferozepore and Gurdaspur and a day later on 8 September, the Sialkot front was opened (Sialkot was the base from where Pakistan had planned an attack on the Chhamb sector.)

It was not that Pakistan had ruled out an Indian offensive across the international border. Reliable reports reaching India indicated that Rawalpindi had moved the major elements of its I Armoured Division (approximately two Patton regiments) into the Lahore area. In addition most of 8 Infantry Division from Peshawar was also known to have moved to the Lyallpur-Sheikhupura area, with one of its brigades at Marala Headworks, about 25 miles from Sialkot. Lt-Gen Harbaksh Singh's own expectation was that Pakistan would adopt an aggressive defensive posture in the Punjab and Rajasthan theatres.

Still there was an element of surprise in the timing of the attack; Indian forces advanced in all sectors without much resistance. By 9 A.M., India had occupied Pakistan's defence positions in Ichhogil Canal, five miles from the border to the Fer-

sector, the Dera Baba Nanak bridge in the Gurdaspur sector, and the same Ichhogil Canal which was ten miles from the Amritsar-Wagah border in the Lahore sector.

By 10.30 A.M. one column in the Lahore sector had crossed the Ichhogil Canal and reached a little beyond the Bata Shoe Factory on the outskirts of Lahore city. The Pakistan Air Force attacked this column many a time and destroyed its 100 vehicles in a couple of hours.

However, Maj-Gen. Niranjan Prasad, commanding the sector, sent an SOS to his Corps headquarters that half of the vehicles of his division (nearly 20,000 vehicles) had been destroyed and that he was being attacked by the Pakistan armour at the flanks; therefore, he had given orders to his men to withdraw by seven miles.

Harbaksh Singh who happened to be at Corps headquarters and was munching a sandwich at that time and feeling on top of the world, because all that he had planned was being carried out, got angry. He ordered General Prasad not to withdraw the men but by then the worst had taken place. The advance column had retreated in confusion, with much loss of life and equipment.

Later General Prasad was removed but it took Indian forces more than a fortnight to reach even the Ichhogil Canal and that too after a heavy loss of men and material.

By the 10th night Indian forces in the Ferozepore sector reached Burki but had to cool their heels because their advance was linked with the progress in the Sialkot sector where the stalemate continued till the cease-fire was ordered at 3.30 A.M. on 23 September.

The real fighting took place in the Khem Karan sector where Pakistan troops planned to cut the Grand Trunk Road at Jandial Guru near Amritsar and capture the vital bridges at Beas and Harika. The area had been obviously chosen with care because it was just plain countryside without many canals and waterways.

For two days the battle was grim. On the 10th General Chaudhuri called Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh to Ambala and suggested the withdrawal of forces to the banks of the Beas—60 miles inside Indian territory—so as to have a natural barrier to stop Pakistan's forces. Harbaksh Singh, more so his Corps Com-

mander, Dhillon, refused to carry out the plan: in fact, it was never executed. (General Choudhuri denied this during his talk with me. He said: 'Those who know me also know that I don't tolerate any nonsense or disobedience from my Army Commanders.)

However, that was the last encounter between the two Generals. Chaudhuri, an armoured hand, told Harbaksh Singh, an infantry man, that he did not understand the armour. Harbaksh Singh said it was courage that mattered, not technical knowledge. After that meeting their relationship was only cursory.

By the time Harbaksb Singh returned from Ambala, Indian forces had foiled Pakistan's thrust into the Khem Karan sector. But they did not follow up the victory and the Pakistanis got the time they needed to revise their strategy.

In his assessment to the Government Harbaksh Singh later said: 'It was fortunate too that Pakistan failed in her grand design in the Khem Karan sector. A blitzkrieg deep into our territory towards the G.T. Road or the Beas bridge would have found us in the helpless position of a commander paralyzed into inaction for want of readily available reserves while the enemy was inexorably pushing deep into his vitals. It is a nightmarish feeling even when considered in retrospect at this stage.'

The terrain in Khem Karan sector helped India. Pakistan's tanks had to line up to meet Indian forces which were secure on three sides: the river on one side, the canal on the second and a railway track on the third.

And then Patton tanks were too sophisticated for the average Pakistani soldier to handle. Computers often went wrong; the tank crews fed in misleading information into the electronic brain and the gunner usually got so involved that he rarely got the chance to fire before the rough and ready gunnery of India's older, simpler and less complicated armour knocked his tank off. This might sound like a paradox but the sheer modernity of the Patton was its undoing.

There was an automatic replacement of ten per cent of the tanks' wear and tear by the USA and Pakistan stacked the tanks without even using them for exercises. The result was that most of those used were brand new.

Brigadier Theograj, who commanded armour at Phillaur (the

Khem Karan sector), later said that he never thought that he was fighting against an entire armoured division; he believed the first Pattons he encountered were stray ones. 'Had I known that it was an armoured division, I might have retreated,' he said. However, the fact remained that he knocked off more than 103 Pattons.

After repulsing Pakistan's armour in the Khem Karan sector Harbaksh Singh tried to ginger up Indian armour in the Sialkot sector. The plan was to surround Sialkot and declare it an open city. But on this front, India had lost the initiative. After covering a distance of five to seven miles Indian forces could not go further because of Pakistan's continuous shelling, and what Harbaksh Singh characterized as 'the lack of drive on the part of Indian commanders'.

Later, Chaudhuri wanted Sialkot to be captured but when two Indian brigades were vanquished by Pakistan, he ordered withdrawal. He was afraid to lose more men.

Rawalpindi diverted part of the armoured division from the Khem Karan sector to Sialkot and General Musa, then Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan forces, rightly claimed after the war that the Indian Air Force was not able to detect the Pattons even though they were moved in daytime.

On the performance of the armoured division, General Harbaksh Singh said in his report to the Government:

The action at Phillaur, it was claimed, surpassed even the sensational feats of Rommel at the height of his glory. The encounter between 6 Armoured Division and our 1 Armoured Division was euphemistically described as the Waterloo of the Patton tanks. And the general public caught in the mania of the prevailing self-adulation lapped up with smug satisfaction the inflated figures of enemy casualties in armour. This was all very complimentary and it was also natural that in the first flush of victory India should be carried away by sentiments in which cold logic found no place. In fact, an objective assessment at that stage would have been frowned upon as unpatriotic. So we did a lot of mutual backthumping.

But when the dust settled down and the achievements of 1 Corps were viewed in their correct perspective, stripped of the

aura of sensation, the initial feeling of exaltation gradually gave way to one of disillusionment. For, with the exception of a few major successes, the formation's record of operational performance was virtually a catalogue of lost victories. It was admitted that we dealt a telling blow to the enemy but we must concede the fact that it fell far short of a decisive defeat when it was within our capacity to do so and for which the circumstances were so favourable. In consequence, the enemy armour was only mauled instead of being crippled beyond recovery—our primary aim....

The Armoured Division found a good action at Phillora, where the skill of junior leadership combined with excellent gunnery badly mauled the enemy armour. But, unfortunately, this was the only bright spot in the otherwise dismal performance of the formation, consistently dogged by want of competent direction at Divisional and Brigade level. The imagination, enterprise and audacity normally associated with armour thrusts was conspicuously absent.

As far as the infantry performance was concerned, commanders at higher levels lacked the correct tactical concept and quickness of decision essential for directing a fast moving operation. There was also a tendency on the part of commanders to hold themselves back instead of being well up to influence actions by their physical presence at the critical time and place in battle.

The campaign illustrates a classic command failure at corps level. Command and control functions were consistently sluggish and, during a critical stage in the offensive, when we were battling for the vital Chawinda-Badiana-Zafarwal area (near Sialkot), virtually ineffective.

A regrettable lack of understanding between certain commanders often thwarted cohesive action so essential in the achievement of a common goal. There were misunderstandings galore between the infantry and armour commanders in the second battle for Chawinda. A lack of rapport appears to be the only explanation.

The operation was also faulty in strategic conception. The Chief of the Army Staff's insistence on launching it from the direction of Samba instead of Nainakot-Narot, as sug-

gested by me, was a grave security risk. Had the enemy undertaken a large-scale offensive in the Jammu-Samba sector (a most likely possibility for isolating J and K Theatre) conjointly with the operations in the Chhamb area, our decisive thrust would have been automatically stumped even before inception. As we had no alternative plan against such a contingency, the consequences could have been disastrous. Moreover, the offensive had for its lines of communication a few indifferent tracks. With short spells of rain these *kacha* tracks would have been reduced to virtual lanes of quagmire into which our thrust would have floundered to a premature halt. We had one such experience on 8 September 1965 when the lorried brigade after only a brief shower of rain could make no progress on the given axis and had to change direction with consequent delay. A repetition of such setbacks in battle would have been fatal in an action which relied on speed of advance to keep the enemy off balance and reeling until the final objective was secured.

The decision to launch the offensive from the direction of Samba was, in brief, a strategic venture fraught with catastrophic possibilities from which we escaped by a series of lucky coincidences. And luck is an imponderable that often plays foul on the field of battle.

The operation in the Sialkot-Shakargarh sector is a typical example of a promising action being foiled through a combination of faulty strategic concept and indifferent tactical execution. The meagre gains we made were due to a fluke of chance. Military ingenuity hardly played a part in it.

It was really a border war because the theatre of hostilities did not go beyond fifteen miles on each side; India occupied 470 square miles of Pakistan's territory and 270 square miles of the Pakistani-occupied Kashmir. Pakistan's gain of Indian territory was to the extent of 210 square miles. Both sides did not disturb East Pakistan; already what they had to handle in the Western region was beyond their capacity.

When the two sides stopped fighting, both had exhausted most of their ammunition. Since India had its own ordnance factories, it could endure longer. Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh said:

In the first few days of the operations, the enemy exercised no restraint on ammunition expenditure and appeared to have large stocks in well-prepared positions. This unrestricted use of ammunition had a demoralizing effect on our troops in the initial stages of the war. Subsequently, as stocks of ammunition dwindled down, without any hope of foreign replenishment, the enemy was less extravagant in the use of artillery fire.

Commenting on Pakistan's tactical concept, Harbaksh Singh said in his report:

It was observed that the basic tactical concept of the Pak Army did not vary fundamentally from our own. In its application, however, there was an unmistakable evidence of the dominant influence of American and Chinese techniques of warfare. This selective grafting of tactical doctrine did not, however, pay the expected dividends for want of imaginative implementation.

The American version was exemplified by the bias for massive fire support, the bold use of armour, relegating the contribution of infantry to a secondary place, and the adoption of the semi-mobile system of defence. Towards the closing phases of the conflict, however, there was appreciable drop in the flagrant use of massive artillery support and the extravagant employment of armour. This was due to lack of indigenous backing and the fact that the expected stream of American replenishments dried up on account of political reasons. The situation would have worsened had the war continued for any length of time.

The Chinese concept found its expression in the multi-directional attack, emphasis on intensive digging and tunnelling in villages, the employment of para military forces for infiltration and the waging of guerilla warfare under the guise of 'liberation movement'. Resort to jitter tactics, especially in the mountains, was another innovation copied from the Chinese who had employed this technique with great success during the 1962 debacle.

As far as Pak leadership in the field was concerned, the

brilliant, the bold and the dashing were rather liberally interspersed with the mediocre, the cautious and the unenterprising. There was no single universally dominant leadership trail that projected itself for attention. The younger generation appeared to be audacious and forceful; the older cadre gave the impression of being rigid and slow in reaction....

The enemy's concept of defence differed from our own in that he kept a very strong mobile reserve and committed minimum troops to hold a few strong positions on likely axes of advance. The reserve was based on armour, elements of reconnaissance and support battalion and infantry and mortars mounted in armoured personnel carriers.

His main positions (Lahore-Kasur and Sialkot sectors) were fully developed, ringed with wire obstacles and extensive minefields and liberally interspersed with bunkers and pill-boxes. Selected villages were converted into strongholds with underground shelters interconnected by a system of elaborate tunnelling. Units and sub-units held relatively greater frontages compared to our own.

The enemy's conduct of defensive operations was based on the American concept of semi-mobile defence. The entire area of operations had a series of control points which enabled the enemy to fight a controlled covering troops and/or defensive action. There was quick reaction to loss of important localities. Counter-attacks were launched by armour and infantry groups, supported by heavy, accurate and sustained artillery fire using variable time fuzes. The infantry, however, seldom pressed home the attack.

On the pattern of Pakistan's attack, Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh said:

The enemy usually tried to create the impression of delivering the attack from several directions. Some armour would appear well away on a flank to lure away our tanks and to divert artillery fire. Simultaneously, an attempt would be made to neutralize our guns by counter bombardment, air action and fire from tanks. Thereafter, tanks approached the forward defended localities six to eight abreast firing their

secondary armament to frighten our infantry. This tanks assault echelon would stand off beyond the range of our recoilless guns and the follow-up armour would try to envelop the locality and/or infiltrate into battalion areas.

Behind the tanks, the infantry would dismount from armoured personnel carriers or troop carrying vehicles to advance in assault formation shouting war cries and firing weapons from hips. The infantry, however, generally halted outside the protective minefields. It would thus appear that the enemy mainly relied on its preponderence of fire power, both artillery and tank, to overwhelm our troops. Wherever our infantry stuck to their ground such attacks invariably fizzled out. . . .

It appeared that Pakistan had prepared the gun areas in elaborate detail, during peace. Not only had survey been done, but target records from various gun positions had been prepared and kept ready for prompt engagements. The gun areas, however, were not dug in properly, more reliance being placed on moving to alternative positions to escape counter bombardment or air action. Very often, for harassing roles, guns and mortars were invariably deployed in temporary gun positions. . . .

The Pakistani infantry lacked the will to close in with our infantry and shirked close quarter battle. In defence, when a determined attack was made by our troops, Pak infantry invariably abandoned its positions well before our assaulting echelons reached the objective.

Pak infantry seldom launched an attack unless supported by armour, both during day and at night. Even then it showed little inclination to close in with our defences. The infantry attacks, in most cases, only amounted to jitter raids.

The war with Pakistan confirmed the old adage that in the final test of battle it is the man behind the gun that matters. Pak infantry was equipped with a range of sophisticated weapons which was the envy of any Eastern army. Its actions were supported by tank and artillery fire on a scale comparable to the extravagance practised in the American Army. And yet in most cases, where our troops stood their ground, Pak infantry failed to make any impact for it fought shy of closing in physically with the defender.

The lesson is clear. Sophistry in weapons and a preponderance of fire support do not by themselves provide an answer to a successful attack; the infantry must come to grips with the defender and evict him by physical force, if necessary. In war, will-power is as important as weaponry.

For Pakistanis it was a *Jehad* (holy war) against *kafirs* (infidel) Hindus. One example was that of a wounded young Pakistani officer captured on the Ferozepore sector who refused to accept blood transfusion, saying: 'I would rather die than accept the blood of a *kafir*' (infidel). The officer died.

On lessons learnt by India, Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh reported to the Government:

Although we did succeed in whittling down Pak's fighting potential, especially armour, and occupied chunks of her territory, most of our offensive actions, however, fizzled out into a series of stalemates without achieving any decisive results. With the exception of the Haji Pir offensive, none of the remaining thrusts was pushed to a successful conclusion. This, to my mind, was due to a faulty strategic concept of the campaign which resulted in a number of ineffective jabs instead of a few selected thrusts in force. In consequence, there were fierce slugging matches spread over a vast area in which we destroyed each other's potential but reached no strategic decisions.

Our strategy for war should have been confined to the concentration of effort on a well-defined offensive actions on narrow frontages to achieve rapier-like thrusts deep into enemy territory and aimed at objectives of military and political importance. The momentum of the offensives should then have been maintained by continual regrouping of forces to ensure the required superiority of effort along the chosen thrusts. In this lies the essence of higher direction of wars.

In most of our battles, commanders rarely, if ever, deviated from the orthodox methods of fighting by the book. There

*All former Generals who had served the Indian Army had suggested this very strategy if ever India were to fight Pakistan.

was a marked tendency to fight shy of the unconventional in battle. In consequence, many a favourable opportunity was allowed to slip away unexploited. The rigid application of tactical doctrine and the unimaginative adherence to the principles of war did win us a few fights, but the cost in men and material was prohibitive. A commander must retain sufficient flexibility of mind to deviate from the beaten track, should the occasion demand.

There was a pronounced inclination to conserve forces for some vague distant contingencies instead of committing them on decisive actions of immediate tactical importance. The Mirpur offensive, the success of which would have had far-reaching consequences, was abandoned on the plea that artillery ammunition should be conserved for any subsequent action. Further, forces were often held in futile reserve under the mistaken notion of retaining balance. The thrust into the Haji Pir was consistently opposed as it was felt that the commission of forces on this action would create an imbalance in that area and invite an attack on Poonch. As subsequent events were to show our offensive into the Haji Pir *unbalanced the enemy, restored our balance in the sector and won for us the only decisive action of the war . . .*

There appeared to be a tendency in higher command to succumb to pressure of events and fall an easy prey to dark and gloomy apprehensions. This is a dangerous attitude for such pessimism rapidly trickles down to the rank and file setting in motion a snowball process of demoralization. An officer, especially in the higher levels of command, must psychologically condition himself never to accept mental defeat, however adverse the circumstances of battle and/or grim the overall situation is. He will usually find that beyond his own disintegrating battle lies an opponent faced with a similar or even a more serious situation. At such junctures the mind and spirit plays the dominant role in deciding the fate of battle—the commander with greater mental stamina carries the day.

Lt-Gen. Harbaksh Singh was critical of the intelligence branches; commanders during the 1962 war against China had

also complained about them. Harbaksh Singh said in his report:

Intelligence about the enemy's activities and intentions often proved to be inaccurate and misleading. There was no concrete evidence of the impending massive infiltration campaign even on the eve of Pak aggression. For want of definite information we could not assess with any degree of certainty Pakistan's projected offensive with regular troops into J & K even when her forces were already poised for action.

The enemy's sudden burst into Chhamb caught us off balance, and, but for our timely retaliation with I and XI Corps, would have swept us out of the area. After the regular campaign had commenced the Intelligence Bureau could not penetrate the fog of war and virtually dried up as a source of information. From then onwards, little was definite, nothing certain.

The Pakistan Air Force did tolerably well but failed to penetrate deep into India. In the opening phase of the operations the PAF caused a serious setback to India's offensive in the Amritsar sector; about 450-500 sorties were flown to help Pakistani forces; in fact, throughout the period of hostilities, the PAF gave close air support to its ground forces.

Pakistan aircraft appeared more often and stayed longer over targets than did the Indians. They carried out a number of bombing raids on the airfields of Ambala, Halwara, Adampur, Jammu and Srinagar. However, damage was negligible.

India's air offensive was not lacking and Musters, Hunters and Gnats, which were primarily short-range aircraft, had the better of Pakistan's Sabres because of the greater skill of the Indian pilots and the effectiveness of their aircraft in low altitude air battles. But the results achieved by the IAF were limited. No doubt the balance of power was in its favour but Pakistan's F-104 Starfighters were superior to what India possessed.

There were also many handicaps from which Indian air support to ground troops suffered: aerial photographs were centralized at Army Headquarters and Air Headquarters in New Delhi,

resulting in inordinate delay in putting them to use. The developed copies reached the front often too late to be of help. In any case only a limited number of requests were entertained for an air-photo.

There was no wireless, telegraphic or any other direct link between joint operation centres and rear airfields--nor for that matter between forward posts and airfields. The Air Force had a wireless telegraphic link between joint operation centres and the supporting wings, but it never functioned satisfactorily because there were very few operators, cipher officers and cipher books. As a result messages piled up and quickly lost their value and importance.

On 8 September, Pakistan extended the war from land and air to the sea by bombarding Dwarka (demolished one dak bungalow and killed one cow) an Indian port about 200 miles south of Karachi. The Indian Navy did not dare to take up the challenge Pakistan posed because of the fear of the submarine loaned Pakistan by the USA in 1964 under the military aid programme. Since India had no submarines, the Navy mostly stayed inside the harbours.

In fact, the Navy had not expected war at all, its aircraft carrier, *Vikrant*, was in dry dock and could not be used because it had to have a favourable tide to get to the sea. Most other ships were on the eastern side.

Later, ships reached the western side and a few wanted to engage Pakistani ships but failed to meet them. One India reconnaissance plane was able to spot out a Pakistani ship but the message did not reach the Indian ship in the neighbourhood. The message was relayed on medium wave which the ship personnel could not receive, it is alleged that the ship was expecting a message on short wave and hence overlooked the medium wave transmitter.

Pakistan also tried to introduce drama in the conflict by dropping paratroops on the airfields of Pathankot, Halwara and Adampur. The strength of each batch was three officers, one junior commissioned officer and sixty other ranks selected from Pakistan's 'Special Service Group'. Their mission was to destroy aircraft and vital installations on the three airfields. On completion of their task the paratroopers were to be picked up by air-

craft on a pre-arranged signal, failing which they were to trickle back unobtrusively into Pakistan.

In the Pathankot area the paratroopers were dropped at 2.30 P.M., two hours before daylight. Through an error, they landed on a marshy piece of ground. By the time they gathered themselves and their equipment, it was too late. By 10 A.M. the intruders were completely surrounded; they surrendered.

In the Adampur area, the paratroopers landed in the vicinity of a village where the barking of dogs gave away their presence. By evening most of them were rounded up.

At Halwara, the paratroopers seemed eager to surrender. There was only a token show of force and they appeared relieved at their detection and the conclusion of a project in which they did not seem to have any heart. Some of the officers frankly admitted that they were doubtful of the value of the operation even before it started.

However, the report of paratroopers being dropped spread in Punjab like wild fire and caused many to see paratroopers behind every bush. The then Punjab Chief Minister, Ram Kishen, was so concerned over the reports coming to him that he rang up General Harbaksh Singh to be reassured that they were false. On the night of 7-8 September, the Ambala Air Force Station Commander, Ambedkar, telephoned General Harbaksh Singh to give a panicky account of a large-scale paratroop drop on his airfield. He claimed to have seen parachutists with his own eyes. This report, as all the others, turned out to be mere fiction. Even now there are many who believe that there was a paradrop over Doaba, near Ludhiana, though none actually took place.

The alarm in the countryside had one unfortunate result. For the illiterate villager anyone dropping by parachute was a paratrooper and a couple of Pakistan Air Force pilots who had baled out of stricken planes were killed. A 'do not kill' appeal had to be issued by New Delhi.

Indeed the patriotism, courage and determination shown by the people of Punjab helped the armed forces all the way. On many fronts, civilians risked their lives to carry hot food to the front. Free refreshment booths for soldiers were opened at key places and railway stations through which they passed. Exemplary was the bravery of private bus drivers (General

Chaudhuri called them dare-devil *thelawalas*) who hauled soldiers and equipment in their buses to the front, often right up to the firing line. The armed forces did not have enough vehicles nor drivers.

Once I asked Gen. Chaudhuri at a defence seminar why India's advance was slow. His reply was that India wanted to destroy Pakistan's armour; not to occupy territory. Subsequently, Air Marshal Arjun Singh also repeated that India essentially fought a war of attrition; what really mattered was the extent of damage inflicted on Pakistan's armed forces. Lt-Gen Harbaksh Singh also told me that the decision taken before attacking Pakistan was not to take Lahore. 'This was not our military aim,' he said.

Gen. Chaudhuri confirmed that the Indian Army never wanted to occupy Lahore. He knew perfectly well that Lahore was well defended with a canal system and that a lot of Indian troops would be used up in occupying the city which by itself would have achieved little. Later, he said during a discussion that the occupation of Lahore would have meant feeding a civilian population of almost one million.

The real reason for not going into Lahore was the fear of street fighting for which the Pakistan Government had prepared the population: 'Fight with doors, windows, sticks, knives or whatever you can find'—this was the call in the streets of Lahore and the people responded to it.

But determined effort to capture Lahore soon after the attack on 6 September might have been rewarding. For example, on 10 September, when the thrust from Ferozepore reached Burki, about twelve miles from Lahore, there was not a single Pakistani soldier between Burki and Lahore. (This was confirmed by a Western diplomat.) There was panic in Lahore and people were fleeing, breaking the barricades outside the city to cross the Ravi. Once that opportunity was lost, taking of Lahore became well-nigh impossible.

If Lahore* had been captured, it would have given the world

*Gen. Chaudhuri told me that Chavan would often tell that Shastri wanted either Lahore or Sialkot to be occupied but his reply was that he had not enough forces to do so 'I had seen during the last world war how a large Russian army was pinned down to Berlin for 14 days to occupy the city. I don't want to do that', Gen. Chaudhuri said

convincing proof of India's might. This was what Kewal Singh, then India's envoy to Pakistan, asked New Delhi to do three days before the hostilities because he found Pakistan in the midst of war preparations. Kaul had also sent a telegram from Moscow that India must capture Lahore and Sialkot at all costs and throw out Pakistan from Chhamb before the cease-fire agreement.

When Dr Radhakrishnan, then President, was returning from abroad, Nasser told him in Cairo on 10 October that if India had taken Lahore, its prestige would have gone up; now the war was more or less drawn.

In the absence of a spectacular and clear victory for India, the Pakistan Government was able to convince its people that it had won the war. I recall when I went to Rawalpindi in January 1966, to cover a Ministerial conference between India and Pakistan, Pakistani journalists asked me how badly Chandni Chowk, the famous shopping Centre in Delhi, had been damaged by bombs. My reply that not a single bomb had been dropped in Delhi was greeted with derisive laughter.

* * *

Shastri always admired the Punjabis for the grit they showed; he told me once: 'No other State would have done so well.' And then added laughingly: 'You Punjabis are good where brawn is concerned; enterprises involving brain baffle you!'

During the Indo-Pakistan conflict, Peking issued (on 16 September) an ultimatum to New Delhi to demolish certain structures on the Tibetan-Sikkim border, return some lost sheep and yaks by 18 September midnight or face 'grave consequences'!

The Indian Government was nervous over the threat; it knew it could not face China and Pakistan at the same time. (In 1951 Mao Tse-tung had issued a warning that India could not afford to have two fronts.)

Following the Chinese 'ultimatum' discreet inquiries were made by both London and Washington. The British countered that any major Chinese attack on India would lead to 'general war'. This was in sharp contrast to an earlier observation made by Wilson, then British Prime Minister, that India was the

aggressor in the conflict with Pakistan and that his Government might have to ask for the return of military equipment given after the Chinese attack in 1962 to ensure that it was not used against Pakistan.

The US gave an assurance that it would not allow India to go under. Between themselves, Washington and London reportedly discussed plans to provide India with air cover in case China attacked so that the IAF was free to hit Chinese targets—Nehru had made a similar request towards the end of the Sino-India war in 1962.

New Delhi also got in touch with the six Colombo Powers to restate that any military action by the Chinese on the Sikkim border or elsewhere would be a breach of Peking's undertaking to the Afro-Asian countries. India expressed its willingness for neutral or joint investigation of the Chinese complaints. The Chinese first extended the ultimatum from 18 September to 22 September and then fired a few provocative shots at a number of places on the Ladakh border and in the Sikkim region. However, Indian forces were strictly ordered not to fire back. That was the end of the 'sheep and yak' incident. Gen. Chaudhuri told me that he was sure that the Chinese would not attack India. They just wanted to register that they were there.

Excepting the UAR, most Muslim countries, including Iran, Indonesia and Turkey, expressed open support to Pakistan, some of them even providing it with arms. But America and Britain stopped all military and economic aid to both countries. And Russia took up a neutral stand and appealed to both New Delhi and Rawalpindi 'to display reason and desist from further military action and take measures towards an immediate end to the hostilities between them'.

The world Powers, especially America, Russia and Britain, were anxious to have the fighting stopped immediately. In fact, after a few days of hostilities in Kashmir, the Security Council passed a resolution on 4 September calling for an immediate cease-fire.

The Council's resolution did not specifically direct the Secretary-General to proceed to India and Pakistan but it was known in advance that he regarded the situation as serious enough to merit an immediate personal visit. U Thant arrived in

Rawalpindi on 9 September and then visited New Delhi on 12 September. At the end of his visit to the sub-continent, he admitted he had drawn a blank but 'that was no reason for any cessation of the efforts of all men of goodwill to achieve it'.

What had come in the way of a cease-fire was Rawalpindi's proposal that Indian and Pakistani forces should withdraw from Kashmir and that a UN force consisting of Afro-Asian nations should take care of Kashmir's security for three months during which a plebiscite be held in the State.

To this New Delhi had replied that Kashmir was an integral part of India and also that a cease-fire was possible if Pakistan was willing to stop its armed or unarmed personnel, military or civil, from crossing the cease-fire line and if Pakistan vacated the Chhamb area of Jammu.

After U Thant's abortive efforts, Ayub proposed a US-Commonwealth initiative to arrange a cease-fire. Washington immediately ruled out any direct US diplomatic intervention; London kept quiet because it had lost India's respect after Wilson had criticized New Delhi summarily.

Finding no end to the fighting, U Thant proposed on 17 September that the Security Council issue a binding order for a cease-fire between India and Pakistan and request the Indian Prime Minister, Shastri, and Pakistan's President Ayub to hold peace talks in a third country. The Council passed a resolution on 20 September calling upon the Governments of India and Pakistan to issue orders for the 'withdrawal of all armed personnel back to the positions held by them before 5 August 1965'. (A UN spokesman clarified to India that armed personnel and troops meant the same thing and included armed infiltrators.)

As a sop to Pakistan, it was stated in the resolution that 'an early cessation of hostilities is essential as a first step towards a peaceful settlement of the outstanding differences between the two countries on Kashmir and other related matters'.

India and Pakistan stopped hostilities at 3.30 A.M. on 23 September. Four days later, Shastri explained to dissatisfied soldiers in the Ferozepore sector that he had to agree to the cease-fire because of foreign pressure, particularly of America, on whom India depended for food and economic aid.

On 26 September, the UN Secretary General reported to the

Security Council that the situation in the entire Lahore sector had become 'explosive'. He added: 'Observance of the cease-fire and withdrawals are closely linked.' (India notified forty-two cease-fire violations by Pakistan.)

The following day (27 September) the Security Council met and unanimously reaffirmed its earlier resolution on the withdrawal of all armed personnel by the two sides. Pakistan formally refused to do so until a settlement was reached on the Kashmir issue. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then Pakistan's Foreign Minister, said that a permanent cease-fire was possible only if the Kashmir problem was solved.

Later, Pakistan proposed a four-power Security Council Commission to start political talks between India and Pakistan. That Britain, America and France would be agreeable to this proposal was understandable but that the Soviet Union had concurred to serve on such a Commission was not comprehensible to India which, in any case, rejected the idea.

Meanwhile, the Commanding Officer of the UN India and Pakistan Observers' Mission, supervising the cease-fire line, reported that incidents between the forces of the two countries were 'virtually unavoidable' because troops were sometimes only fifteen to twenty yards apart. The Secretary General went on reporting to the Security Council that the situation was disconcerting and the Council once again asked India and Pakistan to restore the status quo as on 5 August, before the hostilities.

At the Security Council, on 25 October, Bhutto attacked India vehemently. He talked about India having been subjugated for ten centuries—the script of his speech had it as two centuries but Bhutto reprimanded his delegation and said it should be ten centuries. 'We in Pakistan had ruled over them for eight centuries and civilized them and the British for two centuries', he remarked within the hearing of all.

When Bhutto began speaking on Kashmir, Swaran Singh gathered his papers and left the Chamber with his advisers. His reported understanding with the Council's President was that the debate would be devoted only to the cease-fire and withdrawal of armed personnel and not touch Kashmir.

Bhutto reacted to the Indian walk-out venomously: 'The

Indian dogs have run away from the Security Council Chamber but not from Jammu and Kashmir.'

However, Bhutto later regretted his remarks. When I met him in Rawalpindi in early February 1966, I reminded him of what he had said at the Security Council. 'That was a slip of the tongue. I was emotionally upset. I did not mean that,' he said apologetically.

Those were the days when Washington began to rethink about its policy on Kashmir and to doubt if a plebiscite would be the right solution to the Kashmir problem. In fact, the US veered round to the viewpoint that whatever the solution, India and Pakistan must decide on it themselves and that no outsider could do any good.

The Soviet Union had always favoured bilateral talks. And Kosygin was successful in bringing the two together across the table in Tashkent after the Security Council failed to get the two sides to withdraw their forces from each other's territory.

To Ayub, Kosygin wrote that Tashkent was famous for *pillau* (rice cooked with meat). To Shastri, a vegetarian, Kosygin's invitation spoke of the historic background of the town. (During the hostilities also, he had approached the two sides to meet on the Soviet soil.)

India's first reaction was unfavourable and a cable was sent to T.N. Kaul, then India's Ambassador to the USSR, to communicate 'No' to Moscow. However, he did not forward the reply.

Instead, he sent a long cable to Delhi, requesting it to reconsider its decision against the background of the Soviet support on Kashmir and the fact that Moscow was staking its prestige while asking for such a conference. The Indian Cabinet rescinded its earlier decision and asked the Ambassador to say 'Yes'.

Pakistan was hoping that India would refuse. But when it sent its acceptance, Rawalpindi had no choice but to agree.

Shastri justified his acceptance before some Delhi editors by arguing that it was difficult for India to retain for long Haji Pir and Tithwal, the vantage positions in Kashmir, after the Security Council's unanimous resolution asking India and Pakistan to go back to the positions they occupied before the hostilities. The best thing, he said, would be to have a conference so as to

make Pakistan commit itself to 'certain things' in exchange for withdrawal from the territory India had occupied.

On the very first day (3 January) in Tashkent, it was evident to Shastri that the Soviet Union favoured withdrawal of Indian troops from the Tithwal and Haji Pir areas as part of the disengagement envisaged in the Security Council's resolution of 20 September. Moscow, however, conceded that the implementation of the resolution was linked with the 'withdrawal of armed personnel' including infiltrators. But it tended to put the responsibility of liquidating the infiltrators on India rather than on Pakistan.

From the beginning it was clear that Pakistan's aim was to revive the question of Kashmir and India's to avoid it as far as possible. In his inaugural speech, Ayub said that he would sign a no-war pact with India once 'the basic problem', meaning Kashmir, was resolved. Shastri said a no-war pact would help 'improve the totality of relations between India and Pakistan'.

But before the conference started Ayub conveyed to Kosygin—who was keeping a close liaison with the two sides to ensure that the talks did not go off the rails—that he would not like to meet Shastri only to sign a no-war pact, there must be some gesture on Kashmir. Pakistan's spokesman, Altaf Gauhar, then Rawalpindi's Information Secretary, briefed newspapermen soon after his arrival that if there was no solution on Jammu and Kashmir, 'a meaningful framework between the two countries would not be possible'.

Bhutto was in a sour mood from the first day. All Pakistani delegates greeted Shastri's inaugural speech with loud cheers. Bhutto, however, sat impassively with his hands crossed. Later, when after the speeches, Ayub at the instance of Shastri walked to a private room reserved for discussions, Bhutto wanted to join them. Ayub, however, gestured: 'No.' Bhutto was visibly angry.

The meeting was brief, and Ayub suggested a formal agenda for the talks. Shastri did not think this was essential because he could foresee that what it meant was a discussion on Kashmir and he wanted to avoid it as far as possible. However, Kosygin was able to persuade him to talk on Kashmir by arguing that President Ayub also had to cater to and mollify opinion in Pakistan.

Shastri conceded and, as quid pro quo, Ayub agreed to a discussion on a no-war pact. Obviously, Kosygin had done some arm-twisting in arranging this. Shastri was angry with me for having reported this on behalf of the news agency for which I worked.

Shastri told Ayub that India would withdraw from Haji Pir and Tithwal provided Pakistan vacated Chhamb. Ayub's reply was that his forces would leave Chhamb if Indian forces withdrew from all Pakistani areas. Shastri pointed out that Chhamb was in Jammu and Kashmir and so were Haji Pir and Tithwal; therefore, they should be taken up together and the rest separately.

Ayub stuck to his point: both sides should withdraw from all territories they had occupied during the conflict. (The talks between the two leaders were solely in Hindustani, a mixture of Urdu and Hindi, though the Pakistanis had insisted on the two speaking in Urdu.)

There was a deadlock. Shastri told Ayub—and later Kosygin—that India would be willing to withdraw from all territories if Pakistan were to agree to sign a no-war pact. Ayub said he would consider the suggestion.

Meanwhile, the talks on the preparation of an agenda at the Ministerial level—between Swaran Singh, who had accompanied Shastri and Bhutto—got embroiled into a discussion on Kashmir. Bhutto insisted on its inclusion on the plea that no peace between India and Pakistan was possible until the Kashmir issue was settled. Swaran Singh said that the sovereignty of India over the State was not a matter for mediation, arbitration or discussion.

Swaran Singh expressed his willingness to discuss other matters which Bhutto thought were 'peripheral'. India's approach was that by solving other problems first, there would be so much goodwill generated that it would be easier to tackle even Kashmir.

In its own mind, New Delhi was convinced—and Nehru once wrote to President Kennedy on these lines—that Kashmir was a symptom not a disease of the Indo-Pakistan estrangement and even if Kashmir were presented to Pakistan on a platter, the relations between the two countries would not improve be-

cause the very existence of Pakistan was dependent on anti-Indian feelings.

As 'another matter', Bhutto mentioned the 'ousting of Muslims' from Assam and West Bengal. In the fifties, India discovered that the Muslims from East Pakistan were surreptitiously entering Assam (2,50,000) and West Bengal (1,16,000) for economic reasons. New Delhi then began checking every individual and sending back 'non-citizens'. (Between 1961 and 1967 as many as 1,79,258 infiltrators were sent back from Assam and 16,381 from West Bengal. Many genuine Indians were also thrown out and ultimately the Government set up special courts to go into appeals against quit orders.)

Swaran Singh readily agreed to a discussion on such subjects between the Home Ministers of the two countries. But he raised another 'related' matter; the return of cargo confiscated by Pakistan during the conflict. Rawalpindi had seized Indian cargo worth Rs 10 crores (£ 55 million) against Rs 1 crore (£ 555,555) seized by India.

The deadlock between the Ministers on the one hand and Ayub and Shastri on the other made Kosygin once again shuttle between the Indian and Pakistan camps. Ayub was willing to meet Shastri if he could present a draft agreement for the latter's concurrence. Shastri said he would be willing to consider it. Thus the two met again.

Ayub brought with him a two-page draft typed at his place and it discussed mainly the withdrawal of forces by Pakistan and India and the post-withdrawal steps. There was no mention of a no-war pact.

However, during the meeting, Shastri, a tough negotiator, once again raised the no-war question. Ayub wrote in his own hand on that very typed draft that Pakistan would renounce the use of force in settling disputes with India. (Probably, this is what Bhutto referred to as a secret clause of the Tashkent Agreement in his later speeches.)

Shastri sent in his formal acceptance of the agreement within two hours of the conclusion of the meeting. But Ayub went back on his word and communicated that the draft agreement was not acceptable.

In Ayub's camp, Gulam Farooq, then Commerce Minister,

was agreeable; Shahabdin, then Information Minister, was half inclined, but Bhutto was dead set against the proposals. He threatened to return to Pakistan alone and take 'the nation into confidence'.

When Ayub's rejection reached Shastri's camp, Gromyko was with the Indian delegation. In their hearing he admonished Bhutto, who had called him on the telephone to communicate Ayub's reply. Bhutto had said that when Ayub agreed to renounce the use of force, India had promised to show some concession on Kashmir. Gromyko said, 'it is a lie'.

The conference was practically over; now the effort was to see if an innocuous kind of joint statement was probable. The Indian spokesman was still hedging and said the talks had reached 'a delicate stage'. But the Pakistani delegates were quite outspoken and said that they were packing to go home.*

The Soviet Prime Minister told Shastri that the UN Charter enjoined upon all members to use peaceful methods and that he should not specifically ask for the renunciation of force. 'Then you will have to talk to some other Indian Prime Minister,' Shastri said. Kosygin hastily withdrew his observation and said: 'This is what Ayub said.'

Kosygin then wanted Shastri to show some 'concession' on Kashmir. Shastri did not agree, not even to a statement that he and Ayub would meet later to discuss Kashmir.

Finding Shastri quite firm, Kosygin put all the pressure on Pakistan. Ultimately, Ayub came round to mentioning the renunciation of force in the context of the obligation under the UN Charter. At the back of his mind was also the fear that the breakdown of the talks would mean that Pakistan would have to rehabilitate elsewhere one hundred thousand refugees who had fled Sialkot and Lahore during the hostilities.

Shastri wanted a separate and specific reference to the no-war proposal but agreed to a compromise when Kosygin made it clear to him that the Soviet Union would support any step that the Security Council would take in implementing its resolution

* Hearing about the failure of the talks, Indian forces on the West Pakistan front started planning how to build bridges, cross the rivers and so on. The purpose was to take Lahore if hostilities were resumed.

on the unconditional withdrawal of forces by the two sides. (Later, Shastri confided in Indian journalists that in the face of Kosygin's stand, the Security Council would have gone to the extent of imposing sanctions against India if it did not withdraw its forces. 'I didn't have much choice,' he said.)

Thus Kosygin got the two sides to sign on 10 January 1966 the Tashkent Declaration (Pakistan refused to call it Agreement). Shastri and Ayub reaffirmed their obligation under the UN Charter 'not to have a recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means'.

The operative part of the Declaration was: 'The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan have agreed that all personnel of the two countries shall be withdrawn not later than 25 February 1966 to the positions they held prior to 5 August 1965, and both sides shall observe the cease-fire terms on the cease-fire line.'

The words, 'all personnel' were taken by the Indian side to include armed infiltrators. The Pakistan spokesman at Tashkent, however, denied this interpretation, adding that the armed infiltrators were not sent by Pakistan and that Rawalpindi did not own the responsibility of ousting them.

Bhutto was more forthcoming, and he briefed the Pakistani journalists not to write in favour of the Declaration. He said it was meant only to get Pakistan's territories vacated and he, on his part, started sabotaging the Tashkent Declaration from the day it was signed.

It was alleged that Ayub encouraged Bhutto to do so. This is not true because Ayub addressed between 11 and 27 January scores of meetings in different parts of Pakistan to explain the Tashkent Declaration and to seek the people's cooperation. When Kewal Singh returned to his post in Rawalpindi, Ayub told him that the Tashkent Declaration must be honoured.

However, it was clear that Ayub was under pressure, particularly when the people were asking what they had gained after 'losing thousands of persons in the war'

Pakistan was in a predicament. This was clear when the Ministers of the two sides met in Rawalpindi on 9-10 February for a follow-up. There was no agreement on normalization of relations, not even the resumption of direct flights between the

two countries. Pakistan insisted on a 'meaningful' dialogue on Kashmir, thereby meaning some 'concrete' concessions, and India on taking up other issues first. The Pakistani Ministers and officers told the Indian delegation privately that it would not be able to face public opinion if they were to normalize relations without getting some concession on Kashmir.

The Indian Ministers met Ayub before their departure for New Delhi. Swaran Singh in his suave manner explained that they could make no progress because the Pakistani delegation was insisting on 'concessions' on Kashmir. Ayub was rude in his reply: 'What do we do? You do not want to settle Kashmir. That is the basic issue, others will not take more than a few minutes to settle.'

There was a change in Ayub. Probably, all that he wanted was New Delhi's permission for Pakistani planes to overfly India to facilitate contact between the two wings of his country. Once he had that permission—though Kewal Singh had to go up to Mrs Gandhi to get him that following the refusal of the External Affairs Ministry—Ayub did not appear interested in implementing the Tashkent Declaration.

By that time, Indian forces had vacated Haji Pir, Tithwal and the other territories they had won during the war. Pakistan had now nothing more to gain from the Tashkent Declaration.

Once it looked that even the Kashmir question could be settled at Tashkent itself. After the Declaration, Kosygin asked Shastri to solve the Kashmir issue as well. He agreed and talked to Lt Gen. Kumaramanglam, then India's Chief of the Army Staff designate. Shastri told Kosygin that India would be willing to make some adjustment in the cease-fire line and give some territory of the State to Pakistan. (Before leaving for Tashkent, Sadiq, the Chief Minister of Kashmir, had also requested Shastri to settle the Kashmir issue if possible.)

Kosygin conveyed Shastri's offer to Ayub. He did not reject it and said he would consider it and give his reply later. He never did.

Whatever be the differences over Kashmir, Shastri was so conscious of maintaining the spirit of the Declaration that he told me at his farewell reception in Tashkent that even

meeting Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan,* as he planned to do in Kabul on his way back to India, might be an 'anti-Tashkent act'.

In any case, Shastri did not live to see the day when the Tashkent Declaration became as dead as the dodo. He signed the Declaration in the afternoon and the same night he died of a heart attack (he had had two attacks earlier in India).

The night (10-11 January) Shastri died was preceded by a hectic day for him. Until three in the morning he had been having talks first with Kosygin, and then with Swaran Singh, Chavan and other officials on how the agreement would go down in India. He slept very little.

In the day there were a series of conferences with Ministers and officials, meetings with the Soviet leaders, the meticulous revision of the Tashkent Declaration, and the preparation of his speech. That evening I met by chance his personal physician, Dr R. N. Chug, who accompanied him. I asked him how Shastri was standing the strain. He looked up to the sky and said: 'Everything is in the hands of God.'

Later, I saw Shastri at the farewell party given by the Russians. Somebody had told me that he might break his journey at Rawalpindi to have tea with Ayub. When I checked with him, he said he had not made up his mind.

As a news agency correspondent, I was to travel by Shastri's plane which was to stop at Kabul for a day. Since the departure was quite early, I retired at 11 P.M. I must have been dozing when somebody knocked at my door and said, 'Your Prime Minister is dying'. A Russian lady was waking up all the journalists. Immediately after one of my colleagues pounded hard at my door and repeated the same thing. I rushed downstairs; the Indian Press attache, Teja,† was getting into a cab. I too jumped in.

* In 1947, Gandhiji's associate and a rival said that India was a dangerous State for the Pakhtoons in Pakistan) and used the slogan, only as a stick to beat Pakistan with.

† In a London case, he was confused with Dharma Teja, an Indian who allegedly swindled the Government of money and fled the country.

Shastri's dacha was some distance from the hotel where we journalists were staying. It seemed an unending journey even though it took us only ten minutes to reach there. At the dacha we met Kosygin, a picture of grief, standing on the verandah. He could not speak and only lifted his hands to indicate that Shastri was no more.

The verandah led into the drawing room where Shastri received visitors and telephone calls. I found Dr Chug sitting opposite a team of Soviet doctors who were questioning him through an interpreter.

Attached to this room was Shastri's bedroom. There he lay, a small figure made smaller by the large bed, and the spacious room. Excepting his personal staff, there was none else in the room. We emptied flower vases in the room and spread the flowers on his body in token tribute to the Prime Minister.

While collecting the flowers from the vases, I saw a thermos flask overturned, without the top cap, on a dressing table which stood about ten feet from Shastri's bed. I remember saying then that Shastri must have struggled to open it to get water. His slippers were neatly placed near the bed; it meant that he walked barefoot up to the dressing table in the carpeted room.

There was no buzzer or bell with which he could have summoned help and his private assistants' room was about fifteen yards away. One had to walk through an open corridor to reach it. His sitting room had three telephones: one local, one trunk and one connected with his PAs' room, which also had the extension of local and trunk telephones.

Information pieced together from Shastri's personal staff indicated that Shastri, after attending the farewell reception, reached his dacha around 10 P.M. Sahai, Sharma and Shastri's personal servant, Ram Nath, trooped into his room. They had heard about Ayub's invitation to tea at Rawalpindi. Loyal and devoted as they were, they said that he should not fly over Pakistan because Pakistanis could do mischief.

Sharma recalled how the Gujarat Chief Minister, Balwant Rai Mehta, was killed during the India-Pakistan conflict when a Pakistani plane had downed his Dakota. Shastri said: 'Now we have an agreement. Moreover, Ayub is a nice person.' He

told Ram Nath to bring him his food which was prepared in the dacha by the Russians.

In the kitchen there was a Soviet cook helped by two ladies—both from the Russian Intelligence Department—and they tasted everything, including water, before it was served to Shastri. John Mohammed, T. N. Kaul's cook, was also a helper, mostly used by Shastri's personal staff to prepare non-vegetarian dishes.

Shastri's frugal vegetarian meal consisted of *sag* and *alu* (spinach and potatoes) and a curry. Since he had eaten something at the farewell party, he took very little of these.

When he was eating a call came through from Delhi. Sahai took the call, which was from Venkatraman, another of Shastri's personal assistants. He told Sahai that reaction in Delhi to the Tashkent Declaration was favourable but the household was not happy. He said that Surendra Nath Dwivedi, the Praja Socialist Party leader and Vajpayee, the Jana Sangh leader, had criticized the withdrawal of Indian forces from Haji Pir and Tithwal. When Shastri was told about it, he said that the Opposition had to criticize the Declaration.

Indeed, Shastri had been worrying about the likely reaction to the Declaration—the first thing he told Indian journalists after the signing of the Declaration was: 'I am in your hands; if you write favourably, the country will accept it.'

Sahai asked Shastri if he should connect him on the telephone to New Delhi. He had not talked to his family for two days. Shastri first said 'No' but then changed his mind.

It took Sahai no time to get Shastri's house in New Delhi. This was around 11 P.M. (Tashkent time, half an hour ahead of New Delhi). First, his son-in-law, V.N. Singh, spoke, but he did not say much. Then Kusam, Shastri's eldest daughter and favourite, took over the phone. Shastri asked her in Hindi: '*Tum ko kaisa laga*' (How did you react to it?). She replied: '*Babuji,* hamein achha nahin laga*' (I have not liked it). He asked what about *Anima* (mother, the name by which Mrs Shastri was called in the house). She too had not liked the Declaration, was the reply given. Shastri observed:

* 'Babuji' is an endearing term for 'Father'.

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*'Babaji' is an endearing term for Father

'Agar gharwalon ko achha nahin laga, to bahar wale kya kaher gae?' (If my own family has not liked it, what will outsiders say?).

Shastri asked his daughter to give the telephone to *Amma* (Mrs Shastri). Kusam said that *Amma* did not want to talk. Despite Shastri's many requests, Mrs Shastri did not come to the telephone. Shastri then asked for the morning newspapers to be sent to Kabul, where an Indian Air Force plane was reaching the next day to fetch him.

The telephone call, according to Sahai, appeared to have upset Shastri. He began pacing up and down his room. This was not unusual; at interviews he would often do this while talking. But that night it was almost an unending walk in the room. For one who had had two heart attacks earlier, the telephone conversation and the walking must have been a strain.

Ramnath gave Shastri milk, which he used to take before retiring at night. The Prime Minister again started walking up and down and later asked for water, which was given from the thermos flask* on the dressing table. It was a little after midnight when Shastri told Ramnath to go to his room and get some sleep because he had to get up early to leave for Kabul. Ramnath offered to sleep on the floor in Shastri's room but he was asked to go to his own room upstairs.

The PAs had finished packing the luggage at 1.20 A.M. (Tashkent time), Sahai remembers. They were resting when they suddenly saw Shastri at the door. With great difficulty Shastri asked: 'Where is doctor sahib?'

Shastri's physician, Dr Chug, was asleep in the room where the PAs were packing luggage. Sahai shouted for Chug, while Sharma, assisted by the Indian security man who was also with them, helped Shastri to walk back to his room. If it was a heart attack—myocardiac infarction, an obstruction of blood supply to the heart muscles, as the Soviet doctors said later—this walk, though with help, must have been fatal.

It was in the sitting room that Shastri began coughing ra-

*The Russians had placed one thermos flask in every room occupied by members of the Indian delegation.

kiogly. The personal assistants helped him to bed. Sharma gave him water and remarked: 'Babuji, now you will be all right.' Shastri only touched his chest and then became unconscious. (When Mrs Shastri was told by Sharma in Delhi that he had given him water she said: 'You are a very lucky person because you gave him the last cup of water.'

The physician, who had arrived by then, felt Shastri's pulse and tearfully said: 'Babuji, you did not give me time.' He then gave an injection in the arm and later put the syringe straight into the heart. Finding no response, he attempted re-animation by artificial mouth-to-mouth respiration.

Chug asked Sahai to get doctors. The Soviet Government had posted a security man who, after hearing the word 'doctor' from Sahai, ran for help. A lady doctor arrived ten minutes later, followed by some more. They found Shastri dead. The death was at 1.32 A.M. (Tashkent time); in India it was just after 2 A.M.

Ayub was genuinely grieved by Shastri's death; at about 4 A.M. he came to Shastri's dacha and said, looking at the body. 'Here is a man of peace who gave his life for amity between India and Pakistan.' Later, Ayub told Pakistani journalists that Shastri was one person with whom he had hit it off well; Pakistan and India might have solved their difficulties if he had lived, he said.

When I returned from Tashkent, Mrs Shastri asked me why Shastri's body had turned blue. I replied. 'When bodies are embalmed, I am told, they turn blue.' She then inquired about 'certain cuts' on Shastri's body. I said I did not know; I had not seen the body.

Apparently she and others in the family suspected foul play. A few days later I heard that Mrs Shastri was angry with some of the personal assistants who accompanied Shastri because they had refused to sign a statement alleging that Shastri did not die a natural death.

As days went by, the Shastri family seemed to be convinced that Shastri had been poisoned. In 1970, on 2 October (Shastri's birthday), she openly asked for a probe into her husband's death. The family seems to be upset that John Mohammed, the cook of T N Kaul, at that time India's Ambassador to the

USSR, was allowed to help Ram Nath in the kitchen at Tashkent. This is strange, as the same John Mohammed had prepared food for Shastri when he visited Moscow in 1965.

Following reports the old guard Congress party supported the demand for a probe into Shastri's death, I asked Morarji Desai towards the end of October 1970 whether he really believed that Shastri did not die a natural death. Desai said: 'That is all politics. I am sure there was no foul play. He died of a heart attack. I have checked with the doctor and his Secretary, C.P. Srivastava, who accompanied him to Tashkent.'

Not many Indian MPs were happy over the Tashkent Declaration but Shastri's death consecrated it and Parliament took no time in endorsing it. The Declaration has, however, remained on paper primarily due to Pakistan's intransigence. The relationship between the two countries is still far from normal. In fact, the walls separating the two are rising day by day.

* * *

The Big Powers have also begun to accept the enmity between New Delhi and Rawalpindi as something intractable and their attitude is to leave the two alone. However, in an effort to 'wean' away Pakistan from China both Moscow and Washington have supplied arms to Rawalpindi but they admit that they have failed in their effort. Russian leaders admitted before T. N. Kaul in October 1970 that they were wrong in their expectation that they would be able to 'win over' Pakistan. Kaul replied: 'We told you so.'

The 'one-time exception' which America made towards the end of 1970 to supply arms to Pakistan was essentially, as the Pentagon reportedly convinced Nixon, aimed at maintaining a 'balance of power' between New Delhi and Rawalpindi because Indian ordnance factories were working 'overtime' to produce armaments.

America's arms supply to Pakistan* was despite the assurance which the Under Secretary of State, Nicholas Katzenbach, gave New Delhi in July 1968 during bilateral talks.

* India's estimate of US arms aid to Pakistan is \$150 billion (£ 68 billion)

He had said that America did not want a renewal of fighting in the sub-continent and that it did not want India and Pakistan to spend large sums on arms. New Delhi had pointed out at that time that 90 per cent of the arms used by Pakistan in the 1965 conflict were American; the figure was on the high side, was all that Katzenbach could say.

At that meeting, India had expressed its amazement at a US enactment requiring countries receiving American aid to give a complete list of the sophisticated military equipment purchased by them. The Indian delegation had asked how, when such information was not disclosed even to Parliament, it could be given to America. Washington was assured that New Delhi's expenditure was 15 per cent below the limit agreed upon by India and America at one time.

In any case, there has never been much love lost between India and America, even though Indian leaders during the national movement drew much inspiration from the American War of Independence and Jefferson's Declaration of Human Rights. Roosevelt and his representatives in India fully supported India's freedom movement, often at the risk of British displeasure.

Washington feels that New Delhi is never as critical of Moscow as it is of America. Washington cites the acceptance of Soviet arguments on Berlin, Vietnam, West Asia and hesitancy in condemning Moscow's nuclear weapons tests and invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia as a few examples to support its contention.

India suspects that the US is interested in it primarily as a bulwark against Communism. And to substantiate it it recalls the vehement criticism by Nixon, when he was Vice President, of 'neutralism that makes no moral distinction between the Communist world and the free world.'

The US considers India closer to the Soviet Union. When New Delhi expressed its reluctance to sign the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons sponsored by the USA and the USSR, Washington asked Moscow to use its good offices with New Delhi. Johnson wrote to Kosygin before the latter's visit to India to persuade New Delhi to sign the treaty.

Kosygin avoided discussion (January 1968) on the proposed treaty in New Delhi because it had conveyed its strong opposi-

tion to signing the treaty. He, however, saw to it that the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was mentioned in the joint communique issued after the end of his visit to India. The communique was delayed for 24 hours and was signed only when Mrs Gandhi agreed to include a para on the proposed treaty.

Earlier, when Kewal Singh, then India's envoy to the Soviet Union, was summoned by the Russian Government and told that India, being a non-aligned nation, should be the first to sign so that other countries like West Germany could follow, it was clear what Moscow wanted. The pressure was tantamount to arm-twisting, but India would not budge unless it got some assurance.

India's predicament was that by signing the treaty it would be tying its own hands, while China, not a party to the Agreement, would be free to develop nuclear weapons. The Super Powers' claim that 'vengeance is ours' did not impress India which, if in the event of a nuclear attack by China, might well be destroyed by the time the two countries decided to intervene.

Treating India as a bulwark against China were several small Powers. Nepal, Malaysia and Ceylon (which then was not pro-China) wrote to India not to sign the treaty. Indeed, they wanted India to go all out to make the bomb; from behind their protective neighbour they could then look China in the eye. (In 1970, Mrs Gandhi announced that India might one day make the bomb for peaceful purposes. The rumour is that it is well on the road to making it.)

Following the invasion of Czechoslovakia the Soviet Union eased its pressure on India to halt further alienation of Indian opinion. But it may still resume its arm-twisting.

In addition to persuading Russia to put pressure on India, Washington told New Delhi that it would be difficult to get the US Congress to agree to an aid programme if India were to insist on its right to manufacture the nuclear bomb and 'waste' its resources on the project.

Canada was even more forthright; it warned India that it might have to do without Canadian economic assistance if it did not sign the treaty. Another threat was that it would insist that the Canadian-built reactor in Bombay should be put under

the control of Canadian nationals to ensure that it was used only for peaceful purposes.

Arms supplies to Pakistan and the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are not the only topics on which America and India clash. In fact, there are few issues on which their views coincide. On Vietnam and West Asia their differences are so wide as to be almost unbridgeable.

America argues that the Vietnam war is essentially India's because if ever the Saigon regime were to go under, there would be nothing to stop the Communist tide from surging right up to India's eastern border. New Delhi's contention is that America had driven a nationalist Hanoi into the Communist camp; if America were to withdraw its forces even now Hanoi might become another Belgrade, independent of both Moscow and Peking.

Katzenbach conceded in New Delhi that the fact that Hanoi agreed to hold talks in Paris indicated that North Vietnam was willing to defy China. But America has not been willing to listen to India's advice to make a unilateral announcement about the withdrawal of troops.

When Chester Bowles was US Ambassador to India, he tried his best—and even approached Shastri—to have an Indian medical unit sent to Vietnam, as it had done during the Korean operation. India would not agree to the suggestion.

In fact, after Shastri, India has tended to lean more towards Hanoi. At one stage, New Delhi was thinking in terms of raising the status of its Hanoi mission to Ambassadorial level. Washington's threat to stop all aid (citing the Broomfield amendment to suspend all economic assistance to any country extending 'full diplomatic recognition to the Government of North Vietnam'), if India were to upgrade the mission in Hanoi without doing so in Saigon made New Delhi defer its move. In November 1966, Johnson froze food aid to express US displeasure over the Indian condemnation of US bombing of North Vietnam at the summit meeting of Mrs Gandhi, Nasser and Tito.

America was very unhappy when Madame Binh, the Vietcong leader, visited India in September 1970. K. Keating, America's Ambassador in New Delhi, lodged a protest. But Swaran Singh,

who had taken over the Foreign Ministership from Dinesh Singh by that time, pacified Keating by saying that Madame Binh was not 'his girl friend'.

Dinesh Singh had invited her and, as Swaran Singh explained to the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on External Affairs, the Government of India had to honour the commitment. To soothe the US Swaran Singh tried to play down the visit by absenting himself from the airport on Madame Binh's arrival. (In the prepared 'arrival speech' which Madame Binh read out at the airport Swaran Singh's name was mentioned as among the persons present to welcome her.)

Since Washington and New Delhi do not see eye to eye on policy in South-east Asia, America has shown no interest in India's proposal for an international agreement guaranteeing the integrity, independence, sovereignty and neutrality of the countries in South-east Asia. In a modified form, it is Brezhnev's doctrine, which suggested that the countries in South-east Asia collaborate with one another to defend their independence.

With the passage of time, America and India have gone apart and there is practically no link, except for economic aid, between the two. Washington has not written off New Delhi, but it has become increasingly indifferent.

In March 1970, Van Hollen, US Assistant Secretary of State, visited New Delhi to explain vainly that America's arms supply to Pakistan was a commercial deal and that it had been done not to allow Rawalpindi to get arms from China. (At a lunch-con meeting in New Delhi in reply to my protest, Hollen said: 'Would you have preferred a Chinese bullet to an American?' I replied: 'It does not matter with which bullet I am killed because both are deadly'.)

Had there been a fund of goodwill between Washington and New Delhi, the 'one-time exception'* in favour of Rawalpindi, as explained by the State Department, would have set India's fears at rest. But there was only estrangement.

There was a time when Washington and New Delhi were close to each other on West Asia. The 1956 Suez crisis saw

*New Delhi believes that the US arm supply is valued at £ 150 million; the first time the military aid totalled £ 2 billion.

them working together at the UN and Cairo; they had the aggression by Britain, France and Israel in the Suez vacated.

But the 1967 September conflict in West Asia has thrown them on opposite sides. India has condemned Israel and has demanded vacatioo of all territory, including Jerusalem, occupied during the conflict. America, which has tended to support Israel, is dismayed to find that India 'once again' stands with the Soviets. New Delhi's attitude is viewed in terms of Indo-Soviet rather than Indo-UAR relations; some State Department officials have spoken of India's efforts at the UN as 'servile support of the Soviet position'.

But India has been unwavering in its support to the Arab cause. At times this support has even been indiscreet. For example, a secular India unnecessarily wanted to join the Muslim countries' conference at Rabat in the middle of 1969 to condemn Israel on the burning of the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

New Delhi's claim was that India with 60 million Muslims had a right to be invited. The King of Saudi Arabia accepted the argument advanced by the Indian Ambassador, and arranged for an invitation to be sent to New Delhi despite Rawalpindi's objection that since the Muslims from Israel were not represented at the conference, India should also not be invited.

Till the last minute New Delhi was not sure whether it was being invited. Dinesh Singh, Foreign Minister, who was to go to Moscow, noted on a routine telegram from Rabat (5 September) that in case India were invited, an official delegation be sent.

Before going, he discussed the matter with Coelho, one of the Secretaries at that time, and Kamtekar, Director of the West Asia section at the Ministry. The original note suggesting that India participate in the Rabat conference was his. The two officials recorded on the file their discussion with the Foreign Minister, who had also directed them to consult the Prime Minister on the composition of the delegation.

Mrs Gandhi suggested Barkatullah, a Minister of Rajasthan, as leader; Nurul Hassan, M.P., A.M. Tariq, a Muslim from Jammu and Kashmir, and Att qurrehman, a prominent leader

of a Muslim organization of learned men, Jamiat Ulema Hind, as members of the delegation.

When an official invitation was received by the External Affairs Ministry, Dinesh Singh did not inform the Prime Minister immediately, but straightway went to see Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and requested him to lead the delegation. He told him in the presence of K.K. Shah, a Central Minister, who happened to be at Ahmed's residence, that the Prime Minister desired Ahmed to lead the Indian delegation.

Probably Dinesh Singh thought that in view of his indifferent health, Ahmed would decline the invitation to lead the delegation. But to his surprise Ahmed readily agreed. In place of Nurul Hassan, Dinesh Singh suggested Ali Zaheer. This was because of Dinesh Singh's links with U.P. politics.

Dinesh Singh reportedly left a note for the Prime Minister regarding India's participation in the Rabat conference when he went to Moscow. But the Prime Minister's Secretariat denied that it ever received the note.

Before the official delegation reached Rabat, India's Sikh Ambassador to Morocco addressed the conference and got tremendous applause for his speech even from Pakistan's President Yahya Khan. But soon after stories about the Hindu-Muslim riots in Ahmedabad began reaching Rabat.

Yahya Khan was informed by his officials in Rawalpindi about the strong feeling roused by these reports—many of them exaggerated. He was told that his critic, Bhutto, had convened a Press conference. The suggestion was obvious—that Yahya Khan must do something to sustain his reputation at home.

Yahya Khan told the King of Morocco that if the Indian delegation was allowed to attend the conference he would go back. In fact, he ordered his plane to be got ready. Then Yahya went to his villa and would receive no visitors.

He would also receive no telephone calls but relented when the Shah of Iran insisted on having his call put through. The Shah said that he would be coming to Yahya's villa with the King of Saudi Arabia and the King of Morocco. With great difficulty, the three monarchs persuaded Yahya Khan to stay back for the night.

The King of Morocco suggested that Yahya Khan attend the conference and raise the Kashmir question, so far kept out, and he for one would support the move in the open sessions. All that they wanted was that he should not insist on closing the door to the Indian delegation. But Yahya Khan would not budge—he would leave if the Indian delegation attended.

By that time Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed with his delegation had arrived. He was requested to feign illness and not attend the conference but he did not agree. Several delegates, including those of the UAR and Malaysia went to him and asked him to retire from the conference, but again he said 'No'. He said that if the conference were to ask him unanimously not to attend it he would stay back. The Malaysian representative took upon himself to say that it was the unanimous request of the conference. The Indian delegation then returned to India.

Later, the King of Saudi Arabia sent a message to Mrs Gandhi saying that it would be very difficult for the Muslim nations to keep silent if killings like those at Ahmedabad continued unabated; at least some action should have been taken so that Muslims all over the world would know that the Government of India was doing its best to punish the guilty; it was as if no one was arrested and no one punished.

It is true that Rabat was a slap in the face for New Delhi; but the Muslim countries as a group have never stood against India despite Pakistan's efforts. The UAR, particularly under the late President Nasser, has been closer to India than to Pakistan. When there was a proposal to form an Islamic bloc, it was Nasser who demolished it.

It must be said to the credit of New Delhi that it has never sought alliances in the name of religion. If it were so, India should have been closest to Nepal, the only Hindu country in the world. In fact, relations between the two have seldom been good.

There was a time, soon after India's independence, when King Tribhuvan, father of King Mahendra the present ruler of Nepal, had made an offer to Nehru to merge Nepal (bordering China) with India. He repeated the same offer during his asylum in the Indian embassy at Kathmandu in 1948 after the Ranas, his rivals, threatened his life. But since the installation of King

Mahendra, the relations between the two countries have not been too cordial.

At one time, New Delhi was so exasperated over Mahendra's doings that it encouraged insurgency* within Nepal and raids by exiled Nepalese from Indian territory. Later the policy was changed because there was no popular support from within Nepal.

Subsequently, Nehru sent Shastri to Kathmandu to mend fences. The entire policy was changed and Shastri was able to convince Mahendra about India's bona fides by promising to take action against the Ranas who had taken shelter in Calcutta to escape the King's wrath.

When Shastri visited Kathmandu as Prime Minister in 1965, he was able to persuade Mahendra to agree to allow the establishment of fifty-odd Indian-manned checkposts on the Nepal-Tibet border to keep a watch on the movements of Chinese troops.

However, in 1969, at the instance of Peking, Kathmandu asked New Delhi to dismantle the check-posts and also to withdraw the military liaison group that had been in Nepal almost since 1947.

Nepal has an open border with India; this free access has often become a point of irritation to New Delhi; it suspects that Nepalese manufacturers and traders are misusing the Trade and Transit Treaty to jump tariffs and sell-duty-free goods in India at a premium.

The treaty, signed in 1960, was allowed to lapse on 31 October 1970; each side wanted to wrest the advantage from the other. Nepal wanted the Transit Treaty to be separated from the Trade Treaty to get the advantage of international conventions regarding goods transit which would help its trade with Pakistan. New Delhi, with its bad relations with Rawalpindi, could not afford to agree. Nor did India agree to hand over

*When China attacked India in October 1962, Nehru wrote to Mahendra that a 'chauvinistic and expansionist China' was a threat to the whole of South-east Asia. At the same time, raids from India had stopped. Mahendra said in his reply to Nehru that he was glad that the raids on Nepal 'from shelters in India' had come to an end. He did not refer to the Chinese attack at all in his letter.

trade to private persons (a Nepalese demand) when the Government's policy was to encourage the State Trading Corporation.

'We both are Hindus,' said Navraj Subedi, the Nepalese Minister, seeking privileges in the name of religion. The Indian Minister, L.N. Mishra, retorted: 'You are being goaded by a Muslim [meaning Pakistan] to defy India'.

However, differences between the two countries are not confined to trade alone; they go deeper. Kathmandu is trying to play Peking against New Delhi to get more and more concessions; an Indian is Nepal's ugly American, hated for the aid his country gives. But Mrs Gandhi has made it clear that Mahendra cannot 'blackmail' India any longer, hence an increasing hiatus between the two countries.

Nepal's indifferent attitude has made India go more than half way to meet the demands of Bhutan and Sikkim. New Delhi has agreed to sponsor Bhutan's application for membership of the UN. The Sikkim treaty, which is twenty years old, is to be revised, although New Delhi is confident that it will continue to be its 'protector'.

However, both Bhutan and Sikkim, particularly the former, want to be independent of the 'special relationship' with India. Peking's interest and schemings in the area make New Delhi's job arduous. Also adding to its difficulties is the reported anti-Indian attitude of the Queen of Sikkim, an American

India has not been slack in trying to make friends with its neighbours. Though Nehru had shown interest only in big problems and Big Powers, Shastri departed from that policy and concentrated on India's periphery. He went more than half way to meet Ceylon's demands to settle the problem of citizenship of people of Indian origin in that country. He agreed to take back 520,000 persons, even though they and their forefathers had long been settled in Ceylon and an agreement of 1954 had promised Ceylon citizenship to some of them.

Towards the end of 1970, New Delhi made another gesture to Colombo over the disputed Kachathivu island, in the Palk Straits between Ceylon and India. India allowed Ceylon to extend its territorial waters from 6 to 12 nautical miles, gaining control over Kachathivu, which is about 10 miles from Ceylon's coast.

With Burma, India has been able to come to a border agreement and an understanding on stopping the passage of rebel Nagas to and from China. The rebel Nagas claim they are not Indians and their leader, Phizo, at present in London, has kept aloft the standard of revolt. (The rebels had been going to China over a strip of Burmese territory to get training in guerrilla warfare and return with arms). New Delhi and Rangoon have jointly launched action against them and have been able to stop their trips to China through Burma.

In reciprocation, New Delhi has not encouraged U Nu, the former Burmese Prime Minister, in his efforts to recapture power. When he visited India in 1968, his purpose was to get New Delhi's assistance to lead a revolt in Burma but it refused to give him even refuge. Instead, India assured Gen Ne Win, Burma's Head of State, of its assistance when reports that U Nu had slipped into Burma to raise a Castro-type revolution appeared in the Press.

India's success in winning over its neighbours has been limited and temporary; it was bound to be. For the small neighbours India is a giant. A friendly giant, no doubt, for all except Pakistan, but a giant all the same. Its very size is against it and the neighbouring countries have some fear, even if not for what it is, for what it could be. But none of these countries would like to see India go under; they are conscious of the fact that India has no colonial past. The prospect of a bigger giant, China, swallowing them, is too fearful to contemplate. (This was evident from the wave of disappointment that spread in South-east Asia when Peking humbled New Delhi in 1962.) After China detonated its first nuclear bomb (16 October 1964), many countries in the region wrote to India that it must make the bomb.

This is also the desire of many African nations, despite the fact that they have their differences with New Delhi over the treatment of citizens of Indian origin in their countries. Incidentally, these citizens regard themselves as British citizens, and run down everything that has an Indian stamp.

In fact, it is the future of these persons, more than anything else, which has created bad blood between New Delhi and London. India has blamed the UK for going back on its promise

by passing the new Immigration Act to restrict the entry of even those Asians who hold British passports. Colour, not convenience, is seen behind the step.

This explains New Delhi's renewed protest to Britain against the sale of arms to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. India has argued that such a deal can undo the Commonwealth; New Delhi told so to the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, when he visited India in early January 1971, on his way to Singapore to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Mrs Gandhi did not go to Singapore, nor was she willing to attend the Conference. The announcement of a mid-term poll for the Lok Sabha on 27 December 1970 came as a handy excuse.

New Delhi is averse to walking out of the Commonwealth, even though Arnold Smith,* the Head of the Commonwealth Secretariat, says openly that Mrs Gandhi is against the Commonwealth. It would be more apt to say that she is neither pro nor anti Commonwealth.

As regards relations between India and the UK the two are yet to get away from old sentimental ties and distrust to establish in their place a mature adult understanding. The past is too much with both to attempt anything new.

The ousting of the BBC correspondent from New Delhi in 1970, following the TV screening of Malle's film on India despite New Delhi's protests, provided a spark to the haystack of suspicion, mistrust and hostility that had been piling up between the two. An outburst was bound to take place sooner or later, particularly when anti-British officials were at the helm of office.

It was not so much the screening of the Malle documentaries that bothered them (in any case the French had seen them without cuts in their cinema houses), but Britain itself. In the BBC programme they found a stick to beat it with.

Some day the British period will be just another chapter in India's long history, as the ancient Hindu or Moghul period. Then Britain's contribution to India will be recognized; its sins allowed to be forgotten. But till that happens—probably by the turn of the century—Britons will have to wait patiently and live with India's love-hate relationship.

*During talks with the author in January 1968 in London.

But what New Delhi has yet to realize is that the Big or Super Powers do not require India's good offices as they did in the days of the cold war. These Powers have developed an understanding among themselves on how to maintain the balance of power in the different regions of the world.

India still believes that it has a role to play, a sort of go-between. But it can only do so if it is economically and politically strong. And it appears that India will not be able to have a respite from its domestic problems—lack of economic growth, regional chauvinism and social backwardness—for a long time to come.

CHAPTER 4

The Chequer Board

ALL PICTURE HOUSES IN India display by Government order the national flag on the screen and play the anthem at the end of each show. This practice was introduced at the instance of Mrs Indira Gandhi, then Chairman of the Central Citizens' Council, in 1962 when the Chinese invaded the northern areas, to inculcate a sense of discipline and togetherness.

The nation observed it to a man but today, after eight years, the doors have to be kept closed till the end to ensure that no one leaves in the middle as all good nationalists used to when 'God Save the King' was played during British rule. There are few to honour the flag because there are too many other flags claiming loyalty. Symptomatic was the recent demand of a southern State (Tamil Nadu) to fly its own flag. India is yet to be a nation.

Much of the trouble can be traced to the reorganization of the country into unilingual States* in 1956 in fulfilment of a promise which the Congress party gave first in 1920 and repeated in its 1945 election manifesto. The change from the structure which was the result of an accident or empire considerations during the 150-year British rule quietened passions over most

*Eleven States were constituted Andhra Pradesh (Telugu), Assam (Assamese), Kerala (Malayalam), Madras (Tamil), Mysore (Kannada), Orissa (Oriya), West Bengal (Bengali), Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Hindi). Bombay and Punjab were first kept bilingual, but Bombay was later bifurcated to form Maharashtra (Marathi) and Gujarat (Gujarati), and Haryana (Hindi) was carved out of Punjab (Punjabi).

territorial disputes; it turned the States into impounded linguistic waters ready to submerge other communities within and neighbouring territories without.

In a letter dated 3 June 1961 to the State Chief Ministers, Nehru admitted: 'After the publication of the report of the States Reorganization Commission, another dangerous disruptive force came into evidence. This was linguism.'

Linguistic cohesion has weakened national cohesion. People behave more as Maharashtrians, Tamilians or Bengalis than Indians. And there is a tendency in every State to exalt and exaggerate the achievements of its own linguistic population to the detriment of others.

Every State has made its own language compulsory in schools and colleges, and in Government offices and law courts. 'Sons of the soil' are preferred in selection for jobs, business or Government contracts, others are treated as 'outsiders', often reduced to the status of inferior citizens.

The result is that many 'countries' are in the making in one country. Not inappropriately most of the 'liaison offices' the States have established in New Delhi are in Chanakyapuri (Diplomatic Enclave), and they are not unreasonably sometimes called embassies.

In a country almost as large as Europe without Russia, there cannot but be diversity; customs and manners even dress differ. Language could have been a binding factor, but it has been difficult to choose a common language from among the 15 reorganized languages, most of which differ even in script.

The Constituent Assembly accepted Hindi in the Devnagri script because that was the language which about 45 per cent of Indians speak and understand. No other language could claim a percentage of more than 10. There are many other languages like Bengali and Tamil which are richer than Hindi but in a democracy heads are counted, not weighed.

Earlier, Nehru, then Prime Minister, did make an effort to have Hindustani (a mixture of Urdu and Hindi) as the official language of the Union. His argument was that Hindi, generally associated with Hindus, might generate communal feelings; Hindustani would not. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi had always favoured Hindustani.

At a meeting of Congress party members which had an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly, he placed his proposal but it was defeated by a majority of one vote. Once the Congress party decided to have Hindi, the Constituent Assembly took no time to endorse it.

Since knowledge of Hindi was primarily confined to northern India—it still is—a period of 10 years was given to the rest of India to learn Hindi, English was retained to serve as the official language till then.

The switchover from Hindi to English was to have been on 26 January 1965; the Constitution (1950) had enjoined upon the Government to find out at the end of every two years how much progress had been made in spreading the knowledge of Hindi. The Official Language Commission had reported in 1955 that Hindi was making poor progress in the non-Hindi areas; the Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider the Commission's report (1959) said that the switchover on the target date was not 'practicable'.

Consequently, the Official Language Act (1963) permitted the use of English in addition to Hindi beyond January 1965; but Hindi became the principal language and English the additional. Nehru explained: 'English cannot be, in India, anything but a second language.' In a democracy a language spoken and understood by persons less than five per cent could not have the status of the first.

At that time, the Government also decided not to appoint any more Language Commissions because they revived controversy. The Constitution said: 'The President shall at the expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution, and thereafter with the expiration of 10 years from such commencement, by order constitute a Commission.' The word 'shall' was interpreted as 'may' and the appointment of Commission was killed for all time to come.

Incorporating the Government's decision that Hindi would be the principal official language and English an additional one, the Home Ministry issued a circular on 26 January 1965. Technically, the Government was justified in doing this. But Nehru had assured the non-Hindi speaking population that no switchover to Hindi would take place until they were ready for it.

In the absence of legal assurances, the non-Hindi speaking Madras State felt perturbed over the circular. After all, language touched the livelihood of the people, and they feared that their chances of employment would lessen now that Hindi had become the major language. A statewide agitation started building up in January-February 1965.

The assurance of Nanda, then Home Minister, that the introduction of Hindi could be so regulated as not to cause any hardship to the non-Hindi speaking people did not stop the agitation from spreading or becoming violent. One after another, five people immolated themselves in Madras after setting fire to their clothes; the grim pattern was like that of the protests of Buddhist monks in Saigon.

Though the rioting subsided after a time, the confidence of the non-Hindi speaking people was shattered beyond redemption. Congress party leaders from the South took upon themselves to voice the fears of these groups. Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddy and Nijalingappa met Shastri, then Prime Minister, to emphasize that he should not hustle Hindi through, but should 'uphold the declaration of Nehru' that English would continue as long as non-Hindi-speaking people wanted it.

Shastri gave the assurance that {bilingualism—English} and Hindi—would continue for an indefinite period. Mrs Gandhi went still further and had the Language Act amended to say that English would continue to be used as an additional language 'until resolutions for the discontinuance of the use of the English language ... have been passed by the legislatures of all the States which have not adopted Hindi as their official language'

In other words it meant that [any one State (for example, the Nagaland which has adopted English) could stall the switch-over to Hindi. The Hindi-speaking States were not very enthusiastic about this provision, but none made it an issue.

However, some Hindi zealots resorted to a violent agitation in U.P. and other Hindi-speaking States and stoned vehicles with English number plates. Travellers carried two sets of number plates, one in Hindi and another in English, for their journey from North to South.

In an effort to placate regional sentiment the Government, however, made one mistake: it allowed educational institutions and the State High Courts* to replace English with the regional languages. Some persons like M. C. Chagla, then Foreign Minister, cautioned that hasty action might destroy the country's unity and he resigned on this issue in mid-1967.

He was not taking up the cudgels on behalf of English; his plea was for a gradual switchover. English should be the medium of higher education until Hindi had been sufficiently developed to serve all purposes of all-India administration, higher education and judicial processes.

The Government explained that the Centre had no powers to stop the States from switching over to the regional languages, but there is no doubt that in the hurry to replace English it allowed the States to introduce regional languages even in spheres belonging to the Union, where Hindi should have reigned. Chavan told me: 'We could not stop the trend in the States.'

An attempt to bridge the communication gap between State and State and the Centre by introducing a three-language formula in schools under which every student would be required to learn his mother-tongue, English and Hindi failed. The student in a non-Hindi area would have a bigger burden to carry, it was argued—those whose mother-tongue was Hindi would have to learn only two languages while he would have to master three. It was then laid down that in the Hindi areas students should learn an additional Indian language. Some Hindi-speaking States violated the spirit, if not the letter, of the decision by encouraging students to pick Sanskrit as the 'additional Indian language'. This was far from fair because Hindi and Sanskrit are far too akin to be counted as two different languages.

This issue has continued to simmer, and no solution has yet been found. But the Government has learnt its lesson, its present policy is to allow the use of both English and Hindi—bilingualism—until there is a consensus for a switchover.

The result is that Hindi has not been fully accepted by all States, particularly Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore in the South and West Bengal in the East. To these non-

*The Supreme Court has retained English

Hindi States, Hindi had come to represent rule by *Hindiwallahas* from the North, and they are withdrawing into their linguistic shells.

For all-India purposes they use English, but left to them, each would prefer to transact all business in its own language, and they are making no secret of it. Tamil Nadu demanded last year that Tamil and other regional languages should replace English at the Centre. New Delhi could not possibly agree to this suggestion of making its administration polyglot and wrote back that fifteen languages could not become link languages 'because of the confusion it will entail'. Already, the Government was facing difficulties in implementing Parliament's resolution (1968) to introduce regional languages in addition to English for all-India and Central Service examinations.

The hardest hit are those who do not know the language of the State they live in. The States Reorganization Commission (1953-55) had feared this situation and had recommended safeguards for minority linguistic groups in a State. Parliament accepted those but the States tend to ignore them both in letter and in spirit.

For example, it is laid down that the States will not insist that a candidate for government service should know the regional language, though it could ask him to learn it after recruitment. But in practice a candidate is required to have proficiency in the regional language at the time of joining service.

Again, in every class with more than 25 students having a 'minority language' as the mother-tongue, a State has to provide facilities for instruction in that language. But the practice is to go on rejecting applications in ones and twos so as to be able to declare that the requisite number of 25 claiming instruction in a 'minority language' is not there. (This has affected particularly Muslims who prefer Urdu, considered to be Pakistan's language even though it is one of India's fifteen regional languages.)

In fact, the Linguistic Minorities Commissioner who reports to Parliament every year on the implementation of safeguards for linguistic minorities has complained again and again against the States' attitude; indeed, several State Chief Ministers have refused to give him even an appointment for a discussion.

Some time ago, the Centre issued a circular to underline the

importance of the Linguistic Minorities Commission but New Delhi itself became a party to diluting the powers of that office when a few years ago the same person was given charge of both the Linguistic Minorities and Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commissions.

Not finding equality of opportunity, some members of the linguistic minorities have migrated to their 'own' State (in May 1961 the Bengali-speaking population was driven out of parts of Assam); and some, harassed by other injustices, have demanded further territorial redistribution to give them separate States : Telengana, which is a part of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand of Bihar, Saurashtra of Gujarat, Chittorgarh of Rajasthan, Vidarbha of Maharashtra, Uttarkhand and Bundelkhand of U.P. and so on.

Ethnic divisions also plague the country. On the eastern border, many among the Nagas and the Mizos have risen in revolt demanding independence. The argument of the rebel Nagas—whose leader Phizo has taken refuge in London—is that their land has never been a part of India, not even during British rule. Though not more than 2,000 of them were armed for years they carried on a guerrilla war with the help of arms which the Allies left behind when World War II ended after Japan's capitulation and with assistance from China and Pakistan.

Since 1964 there has been a cease-fire (extended from time to time) between New Delhi and the 'hostile' Nagas. The problem is not completely solved because, as then External Affairs Deputy Minister, Surendra Pal Singh, wrote to Mrs Gandhi in June 1968:

The underground will continue to ask for the extension of the Agreement on Suspension of Operations (AGSOP) and will adhere to the terms of the Agreement so long as it suits them to do so. The moment they find themselves ready to strike they will throw the Agreement to the winds and will start hostilities in full fury.

A substantial number of Mizos, rebellious since March 1966, have been indulging in sniping, raids and ambushes in one of the

six hill districts of Assam,* Mizo Hills, to win sovereignty. While the situation in the area has been brought under control—primarily due to the regrouping of villages with the help of the Army—the rebel Mizos continue to have authority in some of the rural areas.

From the very beginning, the rebel Mizos have been trying to get in touch with various countries for help. Two of their military officials, 'Brig' Sapzoya and 'Senagar' Sekhawiliana, contacted the Chinese Consulate in Dacca some time in the second quarter of 1966. Since then the Mizo rebels have been getting some help from the Chinese.

The Mizo National Front, the Mizo rebels' organization, has been in touch with Pakistan since 1962. Laldenga, Chairman, and Lalumawie, Vice-Chairman, went to Pakistan in November 1962 and returned in February 1964 with money, arms and ammunition. Since 1966, some Mizo volunteers have been getting help and shelter in East Pakistan and a few have established contact with the 'hostile' Nagas.

Both the Nagas and the Mizos are now a lesser problem than they were in the early sixties. It is unlikely that they can ever succeed in winning secession. Already Nagaland is a full-fledged State; and if the Mizo Hill districts had been made Union Territory (ruled directly by the Centre) before 1962, the rebellion might not have taken place; this would have given the Mizos a separate entity from the Assamese whom they disliked.

New Delhi was wiser in 1970, when it was more responsive to the demands of border areas and announced Statehood for the two tiny territories, Manipur and Tripura in the East and Himachal Pradesh in the North. At one time, the Government was opposed to the creation of States which were economically unenviable; now it has rationalized in a note: 'There was no chance of any of these three territories being merged in the adjoining States and a permanent solution to their status [under the Centre] could not be deferred indefinitely.'

This was, however, contrary to the State Reorganization

*The other five districts are: the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Districts, the Garo Hills District, Lushai Hills District, the North Cachar Hills and the Mikir Hills.

Commission's advice: 'If people of these areas [Union territories] seek a fully democratic form of Government, they should be prepared to merge themselves in larger areas which can provide the full normal legislative and administrative machinery of a State.'

The Home Ministry's explanation was not convincing. It looked as if New Delhi was wanting to distribute authority to make the Centre stronger. Or, perhaps, the intention was to create such States as would be dependent on New Delhi for funds to balance their budgets so that in times of need their support would be more readily available. (Under the Indian Constitution, Parliament can pass a measure affecting the States if half of them were to re-endorse it in their legislatures.)

Towards the end of 1970, Mrs Gandhi announced the creation of another State, Meghalaya, which comprised the hill districts of Assam. In fact, Mrs Gandhi was in favour of making it a more or less full-fledged State from the very beginning. But at that time, Desai, then Deputy Prime Minister, and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Mrs Gandhi's confidant, voted against the scheme in the Cabinet. Desai said he would vote against it in Parliament, and Ahmed threatened not only to quit the Cabinet but also to join the Opposition. Later, a compromise was reached by forming a State within a State in which the bigger partner, Assam, kept the Law and Order portfolio.

Indeed, Mrs Gandhi favoured in 1969 the creation of smaller States though she would not go as far as Jayaprakash Narayan, a Gandhite, who suggested that there should be 50 to 60 States. She even consulted her party leaders, D. P. Mishra and Jagjivan Ram, and found them on her side. Even the appointment of a Second Reorganization Commission was considered, but Chavan, then Home Minister, scotched it. Mishra later remarked that Chavan was afraid lest the movement to carve out Vidarbha from Maharashtra (Chavan's home State) should get a fresh lease of life.

Reorganization of the States has followed agitation, but agitation has often followed reorganization. Disputes have mainly risen over the new drawn borders, for it is difficult to draw a line where the sphere of one language ends and of another begins. There are border disputes between Maharashtra and

Mysore,* Mysore and Kerala, Nagaland and Assam and U.P. and Bihar.

*Maharashtra has claimed Mysore's Marathi-speaking areas of Belgaum, including Belgaum town, Khanapur Athni, Chilodi, Huthari, Kanwai, Supa, Haliyal, Hammnabad, Bhalki, Santpur, Aland and Gulbarga. The award of Mehr Chand Mahajan, the late Chief Justice of India, has not solved matters because Maharashtra feels that its contention to make a village as a unit for territorial adjustment has not been accepted. The Central Government where Chavan from Maharashtra is an important leader has also felt that 'some adjustment should be made in favour of Maharashtra'. The Home Ministry, then headed by Chavan, proposed a scheme to transfer to Maharashtra, in addition to the 264 villages recommended by the Mahajan Commission, the following tracts:

The area of Belgaum Municipality to the south of the railway line and west of the Belgaum-Hubli Road along with seven villages south of that tract. (The southern part of the municipality comprises the areas of old Shalipur Municipality now merged in Belgaum and the Tilakwadi area.) Both these areas have a predominantly Marathi-speaking population. In 1951 Shalipur had a Marathi population of 60·7 per cent as against 25·2 per cent Kannada-speaking people. The Marathi population of the entire Belgaum town including the Cantonment is 67,876 and it is expected that about 30,000 Marathi-speaking people would be included in Maharashtra under this arrangement. The seven villages have a population of about 33,000 of which about 18,700 (56·26 per cent) are Marathi-speaking and about 9,800 (29·6 per cent) are Kannada-speaking.

A group of 199 villages from Khanapur, Hiliyal and Supa taluks with a population of about 63,700 of which the Marathi-speaking are 41,250 (64·75 per cent) and Kannada-speaking are 11,500 (17·73 per cent).

A group of 133 villages from Santpur, Bhalki and Hammnabad taluks of Bidar district with a total population of 1,43,000 of which about 89,000 or 62·7 per cent are Marathi-speaking.

The Internal Affairs Committee of the Cabinet on 18 February 1970 approved them with the following modifications:

(1) The villages of Supa taluk and the adjoining forest villages of Khanapur taluk should remain in Mysore. (The fact that one of the major dams of the Kalinadi project would be at Supa seems to have been kept in view.)

(2) The number of villages to be transferred from Bidar district should be reduced so as to leave in Mysore the Bhalki town and the adjoining villages. The town has a Kannada-speaking population of 38·1 per cent and Marathi of 28·12 per cent.

The Centre may have been tempted to implement its scheme but what stopped it from doing so was a threat given by Mysore and other southern leaders of the Congress party opposed to Mrs Gandhi that they would start a civil disobedience movement. (Kamaraj told me that the entire South would be up against the North.) Mrs Gandhi thought it wise to entrust the dispute to a Parliamentary Committee.

In some States regional sentiments have found expression in the formation of *senas* (armies)—the *Shiv Sena* in Maharashtra; the *Gopala Sena* in Kerala, the *Vir Khalsa Dal* in the Punjab, the *Lachit Sena* in Assam, and so on. While some like the *Shiv Sena* have their origin in the economic frustration of the white-collar middle-class and hope to improve their plight by turning out 'outsiders', others like the *Lachit Sena* are primarily to assert the supremacy of one or another ethnic or linguistic group in a State.

Nehru anticipated the rise of regionalism in his lifetime and appointed in 1961 a Committee to study the problem and suggest remedies. (A retired Chief Justice of India, Mehr Chand Mahajan, said at that time that the only remedy was to divide the country into four administrative zones and to do away with linguistic States. Earlier, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, former Governor General, had made the same suggestion.)

But the Committee never submitted its report. It deliberated for a year, travelled around the country at Government expense ultimately utilized the Chinese attack as an opportunity to wind up its deliberations and say that the 'enemy' had made the nation to sink its differences and that no integration measures were now necessary. A great opportunity to face facts was thus lost.

Later, all that the Government was left with was to amend the Constitution (the Sixteenth Amendment Bill) to enable Parliament to legislate against secessionist movements. This had its effect in Kashmir, where Sheikh Abdullah's followers continued to talk about Kashmir's independence.

In Madras (now renamed Tamil Nadu to emphasize the separate identity of the Tamil language), the DMK has given up its demand for an independent Dravidanad, though its leader (and the State Chief Minister), Karunanidhi, explained on 3 April 1970 that the basis of his party's demand for autonomy and its old secessionist demand was the same—the need for more powers for the States. He said the Centre should have only the subjects of Communications, Defence and Foreign Relations, leaving the rest with the States.

Six months later, in September 1970, the DMK tried to give its demand an all-India complexion by convening a conference in Madras of representatives from other States and passing a reso-

lution to demand the amendment of the Constitution for establishing 'self-rule in the States and joint rule at the Centre'. Significantly, the conference's proceedings were sent to the States, not to New Delhi.

But the response to the conference was poor. The reason was the DMK's reputation of being secessionist (the party had advocated until the 1967 poll that the Tamilians being non-Aryans should separate from the Aryan north). Even those who were angry with the Centre did not want to dilute the country's unity.

The all-India parties, transcending State boundaries and loyalties, and, even more than them, Parliament, make for unity. When Air Marshal Nur Mohammed Khan, then Yahya Khan's right-hand man, visited India in 1969 to represent Pakistan at President Zakir Husain's funeral (3 May 1969) he told me that what had kept India together was its Parliament where every region could get its grievance off its chest; 'we have realized that we must have a similar forum'.

Whenever there is any talk of giving more powers to the States, New Delhi's argument is that the Constitution provides for autonomy without weakening the Centre. In support of its thesis, it also cites a recommendation (1969) of the Administrative Reforms Commission that in view of the paramount importance of the unity of India it is necessary to maintain the existing constitutional fabric which is 'quite sound' and that the framework of the Constitution is a federation with a strong Centre.

Surprisingly, the Home Ministry is not so confident; some time ago, in a note, the Ministry warned: 'Time is running out so rapidly that the earliest possible beginning is necessary in taking well-considered decisions regarding Centre-State relations.'

Nonetheless, in the past few months, the Centre and the States have developed an understanding and a pattern of working. New Delhi has realized that the political complexion of the States (six out of 16 States were being ruled by parties other than Mrs Gandhi's Congress at the end of 1970) can be different from that of the Centre and that the old system of disciplining an erring Chief Minister by party directive is gone. On the other hand, the States have come to learn from their experience that they cannot annoy New Delhi and at the same time get Central projects and grants-in-aid.

Even instances of the States not implementing Central laws (particularly Kerala and West Bengal when they were ruled by the Communist coalitions soon after the 1967 poll) have become fewer, although here New Delhi has been helped by its all-India Services—the Indian Administrative Service, which succeeded the Indian Civil Service, and the Indian Police Service—controlled by the Centre. (New Delhi has vainly tried to have more all-India Services.)

For example, during the United Front Government's regime in West Bengal (1967-69), when the State Government itself organized a *Bandh* (a complete strike), and Central property was destroyed without fear of punishment and New Delhi's order not to stop the Centrally-run trains ignored, the Central Home Ministry's threat of disciplinary action against the Chief Secretary, a member of an all-India service, worked.

The agitators who daubed with dirt Hindi signboards in Tamil Nadu were let off lightly; the State prosecuting agency did not pursue the cases vigorously. In Jammu and Kasbmir, there was no respect shown to New Delhi's instructions (1968) to bring to book the conspirators who were openly in touch with Pakistan.

Again, in 1968 when New Delhi issued an ordinance to ban a strike by Central Government employees, Communist controlled Kerala Government did not take action against the absentees. The heads of New Delhi offices in the State asked for the detention of delinquent employees but the State Government did not respond.

Chavan, then Home Minister, pressed for the punishment of the Kerala Government and suggested its dismissal. But Mrs Gandhi was against precipitate action. However, she agreed to issue a Central reprimand to impress on the State that defiance of New Delhi would no longer be tolerated. Giri, then Vice-President, who was in Kerala, on his return to Delhi stopped the Centre from taking any action on the plea that the State population would feel greatly incensed over 'New Delhi's interference'.

The Centre has often reminded the States that under the Constitution (Article 256-57) they are obliged to protect Central offices and other property. But some non-Congress party States have allowed their obligations to stay on paper.

This has made New Delhi to post the Central Reserve Police* to protect Central Government property but three States—Kerala, West Bengal and Punjab—objected to its deployment in their areas. During the Central Government employees' strike, then Kerala Chief Minister protested against the posting of the CRP. Incidentally, the Chief Minister was never informed about the deployment of the force, which was done by New Delhi through the State Chief Secretary and the Inspector-General of Police who are members of All-India Services.

The Centre has also begun using the CRP to deal with 'disturbances of public order in an emergency' even without the States' concurrence. The Attorney-General of India has held that the Centre has no such powers since 'law and order' is a State subject. But New Delhi is not reconciled to the advice.

There are growing differences of opinion between the Centre and the States on the powers of State Governors who are nominated for five years by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. This procedure has tended to favour the Centre.

Since it is within the discretion of the Governor of a State to invite a person to form the State Government, he has tended to follow the wishes of the Prime Minister. In the last decade the Governors have used their discretion on the 'stability' of a State Government as many as 14 times. The controversy over the 'misuse' of Governors' powers began with Rajasthan and it spread to Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh where the party governed was to the liking of the Centre. And there was no doubt that in most cases the Governors had played politics.

To lay down norms for the Governors, the then Home Minister wrote (1967) to five constitutional experts—M. C. Mahajan, A. K. Sarkar, M. C. Setalvad, P. B. Gajendragadkar and H. M. Seervai. The advice sought was what a Governor should do when no party secured an absolute majority in a State Assembly following a General Election.

Their opinion was:

*The Industrial Protection Force has also been constituted to guard public sector undertakings.

- (1) That the Assembly should have an opportunity to express its confidence in the new Government without any delay, and, therefore, there should not be an interval of more than a fortnight between the swearing-in of a Ministry, and the commencement of the new session of the legislature. (The Governor has no power to have a session of the Assembly called within a fortnight, but he should use his influence to have it called within that period.)
- (2) That the alignment of Independents should not be ignored while assessing who is likely to command a majority in the Assembly; and
- (3) That the Governor should invite the person who he has found, as a result of his soundings, to be the most likely to command a stable majority in the Legislature to form the Government.

The Central Government discussed these points with Opposition leaders, who generally concurred. But when the Home Minister wrote to them formally to express their agreement there was no response. The Government did not pursue the matter further; it decided to have guidelines through the proposed Inter-State Council. (It is provided in the Indian Constitution.)

At the Governors' Conference in November 1970, the President suggested a code embodying the Governors' powers but Mrs Gandhi was opposed to it. After all the discretion of Governors had helped the party in power at the Centre in the past, and why should it give up that advantage now?

The role of Governors had also become important in face of the rush of defections following political uncertainty in certain States—for example, Haryana,* Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh—after the 1967 poll. In this game, the rival sides offered money and office to entice members. The situation became so bad that an all-party committee was constituted to find out how to stop legislators from turning turn-coats, seeking money or position.

*In Haryana, two Assembly members, Aya Ram (the one who came) and Gaya Ram (the one who went), crossed the floor so many times that they came to represent a typical defector.

The Committee decided unanimously (1969) to have a code of conduct and a standing body to assist in its observance. At that time, Chavan, who presided over the deliberations as Home Minister, wanted it to be left to the political parties to arrive at a code, but Setalvad, a jurist, and Madhu Limaye, the SSP leader, insisted that a code must be evolved. Ranga, the Swatantra Party leader, went a step further and wanted the Committee to be kept alive until a code was found.

There was wide support for the suggestion that no one other than a member of the Lower House should be appointed Prime Minister or Chief Minister. The Communist, the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh representatives argued that the fundamental proprieties in a democracy and the constitutional status of the Lower House demanded such a provision. Jayaprakash Narayan described the tendency to appoint one who is not a member of the Lower House Prime Minister or Chief Minister as pernicious in a democracy.

Understandably, when it came to framing a Bill, the Central Government added the provision that an Upper House member could be Prime Minister or Chief Minister provided he was elected to the Lower House within six months of his appointment—Mrs Gandhi was a member of the Rajya Sabha when she assumed the Prime Ministership after Shastri's death.

But the Government proposes to legislate that no defector can hold office after crossing the floor until he resigns and goes back to the electorate for re-election. But the Opposition parties have yet to agree to the Bill formally.

Defections plague the parties after every election; before every election it is caste that troubles them. No doubt, the old stratification, based primarily on work into *Brahmins* (priests), *Kshatriyas* (warriors and rulers), *Vaishyas* (traders) and *Shudras* (servants) has been so eroded that it is hardly recognizable. man's sub-caste (*jati*—literally birth) intimately connected with his occupation has assumed more relevance than caste (*yarna*—literally colour).

But sub-caste has become more rigid and disciplined than the caste itself. For example, *Kashtriyas* have got divided into two sub-castes of Rajputs and Thakurs. And at the time of election people tend to vote for the candidate of their sub-caste (al-

known as *bradari*) ignoring the pulls of the caste. There have been occasions when Rajputs or Thakurs joined hands with Brahmins to defeat a *Kashtriya*.

There is one more caste—the Panchama (literally the fifth)—of Pariahs or the untouchables. They also have their own sub-castes but downtrodden, dependent and unorganized as they are, they tend to follow the directives of the higher castes, the influential or the rich. Being the poorest they can easily be bought over. And hence prone to accept bribes.

But today the class struggle is not between the upper castes and the lower, though Kamaraj, belonging to the backward Nadar community, has been vainly wooing Jagjivan Ram, the Harijan leader, since the split in the Congress party to join hands against Mrs Gandhi, a Brahmin, and Chavan, a *Kashtriya*.

The real confrontation is between agriculturists and traders. Whether *Patidars* and *Annayals* in Gujarat, *Mahisyas* in West Bengal, *Kammas* and *Reddis* in Andhra Pradesh, *Lingayats* and *Okkalligas* in Mysore, *Bhumidars* in Bihar and *Jats* in U.P., the Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana—they are all agriculturists who are trying to control politics to the exclusion of *Banyas* (traders) who had been ruling in their areas.

The Harijans and tribals—the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes as they are officially called—constitute almost one-fourth of India's population (once a Backward Classes Commission, appointed by the Central Government, tried to make economic conditions, rather than caste, as the criterion to determine backwardness and found that on that basis almost 90 per cent of India's population would have to be declared backward.) However, their share in the cake of economic development is not even one-thousandth.

The Constituent Assembly reserved for them for 10 years (up to 1960) 77 seats of 522 in the Lok Sabha and 503 of 2,500 in the State Assemblies and 12½ per cent jobs in all public services. But since their improvement has been slow and since the backward classes themselves have developed a vested interest in reservations, the 10-year period of concessions has been extended again and again.

Electionwise they are an important factor to reckon with but otherwise there is only a slight change in their status. The Un-

touchability Offences Act, which provides for imprisonment and fine to those who practise discrimination,* is mostly on paper, particularly in rural areas. The Home Ministry's information on the basis of reports received in November 1970 showed that violence against Harijans had increased and that cases of discrimination were not pursued vigorously both at the stages of inquiry and prosecution.

In fact, many Harijans and tribals are embracing Christianity to escape the rigours of discrimination and also to get jobs which the proselytizing foreign missionaries have often offered in exchange of conversion. The Central Government's own report is that 'missionaries have been adopting unfair means such as allurements to promote conversion'. Instances were so many in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh that the two States had to enact legislation to prohibit conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or inducement or by fraudulent means.

After the analysis of the 1961 census, the Home Ministry has come to the conclusion that 'at the time of partition [1947], the number of Christians in the tribal areas of Assam, Pondicherry [the former French possession] and Goa, Daman and Diu [once with the Portuguese] was about 5.6 million; fourteen years later, it was more than 10 million; the rate of increase in the Christian population as compared to persons professing other religions has been comparatively higher in Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland'.

Discrimination is bad enough but economic stringency is worse. With more and more Harijans getting educated—there are scholarships and special educational facilities—they refuse to take to the job of their forefathers of carrying nightsoil on their heads (mechanized disposal is still rare in India), sweeping floors or cleaning drains. In fact, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who submits reports to Parliament every year, warned in 1969 that Harijans might resort to violence to improve their lot. 'I see that happening if nothing is done for them immediately,' Jagjivan Ram once told me.

*In Gujarat textile mills, Harijans are employed in the spinning section only because there the workers have at times to use their lips to moisten the two ends of a thread to connect them.

Discontent, as always, has been a fertile breeding ground for Communism. The Communists have tried to convert the caste war into a class war. They are fomenting agitation among the lowest castes and tribes, alternating between violence and peaceful methods.

Soon after independence, the Communists organized an agrarian revolt in Telengana, then part of Nizam's Hyderabad, but the Government crushed it with a heavy hand. The Communists then changed their tactics and decided to capture power through parliamentary methods.

Relevant was also the question of 'like-minded' parties uniting to provide an alternative. Here differences arose over cooperation with the ruling party, that is, the Congress party. While one section, which later came to be known as the Right Communists or the pro-Soviet Communists, favoured a national front with the 'progressive elements' within the Congress Party, the other section—the pro-China Communists who later formed the CPI (Marxists)—was keen on treating the entire Congress party as a 'class enemy'.

The two sections continued to differ but remained as one party. The deterioration in the Sino-Indian relations strained their unity. In 1960, two Indian Communist leaders, Harekrishna Konar and Damodaran—the former is now a leader of the CPI (M) and the latter of the CPI—visited Hanoi and met the Chinese leaders there.

On return, Konar gave a detailed exposition of the Chinese stand on various issues and the growing estrangement between Peking and Moscow. It was clear at that time that the Chinese did not think of the Indian Government beyond a combination of petty bourgeoisie. This helped the Leftist group in the Communist party to 'crystallize' their views.

In October 1962, the Sino-Indian war broke out. Many Communist leaders, reportedly pro-Chinese in their views, including Kerala's E.M.S. Namboodiripad and West Bengal's Jyoti Basu, were arrested. The party's daily *Svadhinata* (Calcutta), then under Leftist control, came overnight into the hands of the Rightists, who issued statements denouncing the Chinese.

This indicated the coming polarization within the party. However, extremists, led mainly by B. T. Ranadive, who had been

consistently extremist since the formation of the party in the late twenties, maintained an equivocal attitude on the Chinese aggression. In their statements they refrained from attacking China directly and thus stood out in sharp contrast to their Rightist comrades.

The uneasy coexistence between the Leftists and the Rightists continued until 1964, when the controversy over letters written by S.A. Dange, then party's Chairman, added fuel to the fire. The letters located at the National Archives showed that during the Meerut Conspiracy Case in the thirties Dange had acted as a British 'spy'. Dange said that the letters were forged and planted by the British to discredit him.

A commission set up by the party acquitted Dange. But the pro-Chinese Communists were not satisfied. They wanted Dange to vacate the chair at the time of discussion of his case in the party. When he refused, some leaders, including Nambodripad and Jyoti Basu, walked out.

This led to the formation of the CPI (M) in 1964. In the same year, the original CPI and the Marxists held their conferences in Bombay and Calcutta, respectively. While the former characterized the Central Government as an organ of the national bourgeoisie, the Marxist felt that it was a combination of feudal landlords and big bourgeoisie, the latter dominating. The CPI envisaged the formation of a national democratic Government but the Marxists pledged to work for a people's democratic Government led by the working class.

The next split in the Communist movement came in 1967, after the formation of United Front Governments, dominated by both the Communist parties, in West Bengal and Kerala. The present uprising engineered by the extremists in Naxalbari (North Bengal) embarrassed the CPI(M)-led Government in West Bengal since the leaders of the uprising were all Communists. Under pressure from other partners of the Government, the CPI(M) supported stringent measures against the rebels and the uprising was crushed.

But this led to the breaking away of a group of extremists from the party, known as Naxalites. They accused the leadership of participating in 'bourgeoisie parliamentary politics' and giving up the promises of preparing for a revolution. They also char-

ged their leaders with forsaking the theories of Mao Tse-tung. [Radio Peking promptly supported them and dubbed the CPI (M) as neo-revisionists.]

The Marxists were forced for the first time to come out against the Chinese at their party Congress at Madurai in 1968. They criticized the Chinese for their wrong understanding of the Indian Government and sought to follow a course independent of both the Chinese and the Soviet parties.

Meanwhile, the Naxalites spread their activities to other areas, notably Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and parts of Bihar and U.P. The different groups could not agree on many issues. Efforts to unify the groups came to an end with the formation of the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) in May 1969. An Andhra group, led by Nagi Reddy, refused to join the party and voiced its differences with the West Bengal leader, Charu Mazumdar. Reddy felt that the latter's rejection of trade unions and mass fronts was wrong.

The Naxalites have been primarily planning a revolution in the countryside on the advice of the Chinese Communist party, according to New Delhi Intelligence sources. The political line of the party centres round Mao's directive of armed struggle in villages. Tactically, the party relies on guerrilla techniques. (The hostile Nagas who went to Peking to get arms were asked to pass on some to the extreme Communists)

In Andhra Pradesh the extremists have been leading tribal Girijans in the Srikakulam agency areas to launch attacks on landlords and the police. Incidents of extremist violence to some other districts of Andhra Pradesh, such as Warangal and Khammam, have also been reported.

Since the middle of 1969, a group of Naxalites has also torn a leaf out of the book of Che Guevara to organize 'urban revolution'. The response from the student community is growing, particularly when most of them have very few openings to look forward to and when they believe that the present system would have to be destroyed before 'anything else could be built in its place'. Theirs is a rebellion, not revolution.

In 1970, there was suddenly a spurt in violence. As against 195 incidents of lawlessness in 1969, there were as many as 1,432 incidents till October 1970. The extremists committed 159

murders but their attacks were mainly on national symbols like the national flag and the statues of Mahatma Gandhi who according to them was anti-revolutionary because he had preached progress through non-violence and peaceful methods.

From April 1970 onward the extremists* made policemen their target, particularly so in West Bengal. Their main purpose was to demoralize the police so that they do not go to the countryside to restore to the rightful owner the land which they had forcibly occupied and distributed among the 'landless'. In West Bengal nearly 45 policemen were killed until December 1970.

With the split in the ruling Congress party towards the end of 1969, the CPI and CPI (M) differences took a sharper turn. While the CPI characterized the split as a vindication of their old stand on 'progressive Congressmen', the CPI (M) refused to accept it as an ideological division.

For the Rightists, the difference between the factions of the Communist party was that between tweedledum and tweedledee, and there is nothing to choose between the two because both presented 'the greatest danger to India'.

One of the Rightist parties is the Swatantra which is playing up the advantages of free enterprise against controlled economy. It is pro-West, anti-Soviet and less rigid towards Pakistan than most Rightists are. It has not been able to make headway because it has not been able to live down its reputation of being a party of 'rich men'—a slogan which Nehru had coined to criticize it.

The main Rightist party is, however, the Jana Sangh, the most youthful and vibrant; its appeal is in the name of nationalism and Hindu religion to fight the Godless philosophy of Communism.

The party tends to be pro-West and anti-Soviet but its attitude is coloured by its obsession of Pakistan. It is pro-Israel because Tel Aviv is fighting the Arab Muslims.

The Sangh has made some impact in northern India; it is not so much the party's anti-Communist stance that is attracting the

*New Delhi has received reports that the Ministers are on the Naxalites' list for 'liquidation purposes'; in December 1970, they stabbed the wife and son of a Bengali Minister at the Centre.

people as its anti-Muslim. Those who have borne the brunt of partition are easily convinced that the Muslims who have a separate nation (Pakistan) should quit India. The party's bias in favour of Hindi which is the dominant language of northern India has also paid dividends.

The Jana Sangh's military wing is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which was banned following Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in January 1948. When it changed its constitution to say that it was 'the duty of every citizen to be loyal to and respect the State flag' and when its leader, M S Golwalkar, conveyed to Patel that every member of his party was 'loyal to the country, its Constitution and all the emblems of India's national independence and glory', the ban was withdrawn.

But there is no doubt that the RSS is a militant organization believing in establishing Hindu Raj and furthering Hindu culture, which it considers is the real *Bharati* (Indian) culture. The Jana Sangh is only a projection of the RSS even though its chief, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is less communal than his other party leaders. And if it ever comes to deciding which is the real party, there is no doubt that the RSS will emerge supreme.

The Jana Sangh and the RSS contend that they are mobilizing Hindus because of the prevalence of Muslim communalism even after partition. But this is having an effect on the Muslims, who are also beginning to organize themselves to fight 'Hindu communalism'. The Indian Union Muslim League, successor to the All India Muslim League, is trying to spread its activities all over India. At present its membership is less than half a million, largely in Kerala followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, and its influence is growing.

First, it was cautious in its efforts to gain a foothold in the North because of the presence of a large number of people ousted from Pakistan who would get worked up at the very mention of the name of the Muslim League (the architect of Pakistan). The Indian League kept itself in the background but inspired and actively sponsored the growth of the Progressive Muslim League in West Bengal and the Muslim Majlis in U.P.

But now the Indian League has come out in the open; in May 1970 the Muslim Majlis units were wound up in some parts of U.P. (Meerut and Moradabad) and instead were created branches of

the U.P. Muslim League. A month later, the Muslim League was constituted in Delhi and the Progressive Muslim League in West Bengal and both got themselves affiliated to the Indian League.

Thus an all-India party of Muslims has taken shape to 'protect Muslim' interests. It now openly talks of 'Islamic unity'. The seeds were, however, sown in June 1961 when an All India Muslim Convention was held to recount 'the maltreatment which we [the Muslims] have been subjected to during the last 13 years'. What they primarily had in mind was the 'deterioration' in the living conditions of the Muslims.

In a country where the annual economic growth has been around 3 per cent and population rise 2.5 per cent, there is only 0.5 per cent of the economic gain for both Hindus and Muslims. Even the limited growth has benefited the Hindus more than the Muslims. There are not many jobs and opportunities available in business and professions to go round to everybody, but there is greater preference for Hindus and discrimination against Muslims.

A foreign businessman explained in Delhi: 'We have to deal with Government officials every day and we have found that a Muslim employee finds it difficult to establish rapport with Hindu officials'.

It is true that most of the Muslims who were above average migrated to Pakistan, and even now many among them after education, particularly at the Muslim University in Aligarh (U.P.), leave India, but it is equally true that even those who are in the country do not normally get their due share. While others distrust them to some extent, they must share the blame for they keep away from competitive examinations. A recent official study has shown that only 1.6 per cent Muslim candidates appear in competitive examinations for All India and Central Services.

The late Shastri when he was Home Minister informally suggested to all Chief Ministers to give weightage to Muslims in the recruitment to the police force at lower levels. His argument was that since very few Muslim policemen are left following partition, the Muslim population was worried. But most States took a legalistic view and refused to show preference to any community in a secular country.

Technically, the Chief Ministers were right and probably the implementation of Shastri's advice would have led to the revival of the pre-partition theory of communal weightage which ultimately led to the country's division. But how else could confidence be infused into Muslims?

To some extent, the Hindu-Muslim question is the hangover of the past when the British had introduced the communal electorate and had followed the policy of divide-and rule. But to a large extent the communal tensions, as summed up by official inquiries, have grown out of:

- (a) distrust of Muslims by Hindus on account of the feeling that in the struggle for independence the Muslims betrayed them and got the country partitioned;
- (b) subsequent treatment of Hindus in Pakistan;
- (c) attitude of some Muslims indicating their separatism from the majority community, for example, movements for reservation of posts, for separate institutions, etc ,
- (d) attitude of the RSS and the Jana Sangh towards Muslims, and
- (e) the fact that some infuriated Muslims have on occasions shown sympathy for Pakistan or even shouted 'Pakistan Zindabad' (Long Live Pakistan).

Even now some incidents occur for the same reasons but the main cause is the lack of contact between the two communities and loss of faith in each other

The two-nation theory propagated by the Muslim League before partition has led many Hindus to look upon Muslims as people belonging to the other nation even though under the Indian Constitution all citizens are equal. 'It was not much good for us to blame Pakistan', as Nehru once wrote to the Chief Ministers, 'for we have carried all this time the seeds of communalism. Muslim communalism continued in a small way in India. But it could not play any big part because it was weak. Hindu and Sikh communalism, as well as other varieties of it, however, continued to flourish in India.'

The result is conflagrations like the ones in Bihar (1962-65), Gujarat (1969) and Maharashtra (1970). Between 1950—52

1970, the number of communal incidents went up from 700 to 3,000; and according to official figures as many as 3,508 persons lost their lives. In thirteen years, from 1950 to 1963, the figure stood at 389 only.

The Centre's honesty and keeness to curb communalism is beyond doubt; it has amended the Criminal Procedure Code, legislated new Bills, seriously debated a ban on communal organizations and told the States to deal with communal incidents seriously. But it is the State administrations which are complacent and which are at times helpless because most of the lower rank employees have been communal-minded. For example, in a recent letter to the Chief Ministers, the Home Ministry admitted that 'in one State 60 per cent of the Block Development Officers [working in villages] are said to belong to the RSS, the ideology of which had done grave harm to the country in the past and is likely to do so still'.

The defence of most States is that Muslims have not integrated with Hindus: 'It had not been possible to improve the social order of Muslims as much as had been done in the case of Hindus with the result that the Muslims had not really been modernized' is the typical comment which a Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister made some time ago.

Even though there are instructions (1968) to the State Intelligence Departments to 'cover the speeches of important public men, who are well known for their communal views' there is generally no verbatim record kept and hence judicial action is difficult to pursue. Similarly, there is an order issued in 1967 to prosecute newspapers which tend 'to promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different religions, racial or language groups, castes or communities' but there have been very few prosecutions for breaches.

Mrs Gandhi has revived the Integration Council which her father had constituted in 1961 when the curve of communalism and regionalism had shown ascendancy. The Swatantra Party was in favour of a person like Rajagopalachari to head the re-constituted Council but Mrs Gandhi presides over it.

The Council includes representatives of all political parties and meets frequently to consider ways to curb communalism. But the Council is not very effective. Recently, the Communist Party

of India refused to go along with the Council's decision to hold an all-party conference to condemn communalism on the ground that it would not sit with the Jana Sangh on the same platform.

Whether it is a communal question or the linguistic trouble, there are very few who can take a fully objective and impartial view. When a crisis comes, most people get swept away and instead of logic, anger and passion seize hold of them. The devil which had been pushed away into some corner of their minds displays itself again and it becomes evident that they are still far from having developed a broad-minded, tolerant and all-India nationalism.

Nehru traced this state of affairs to past history and conditioning. 'We may blame the caste system which has divided the Hindus into innumerable compartments or we may just say that this represents social backwardness and the only way to get rid of it is for social and economic progress to be made.'

* * *

Between the Right and the Left once stood the massive Congress party in which were men of every political hue except the darkest. Then came the split and there was no longer a giant at the centre.

Both factions, the old guard Congress party and Mrs Gandhi's Congress party, began to look for allies. The former moved to the Right in an effort to pull down Mrs Gandhi from office and the latter to the Left to stay in power.

Mrs Gandhi first made overtures to the non-Communist Leftist parties. She approached the Praja Socialist Party through Raghuramaiah, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs but Nath Pai, the SSP leader, refused to deal with intermediaries; if any talking had to be done Mrs Gandhi herself should do it. Later, she did so and a vague kind of understanding was reached.

A similar approach was made to the Samyukta Socialist Party and Mrs Nandini Satpathy, Minister of State, met S M Joshi, a senior SSP leader. He expressed willingness to join hands with Mrs. Gandhi but his party's chief, Madhu Limaye, wanted the Prime Minister to talk to them directly.

At the same time, both parties asked Mrs Gandhi to spell out

her policies. But all that she could tell them was that hers would be a Left-of-Centre programme; she would not elaborate because she had to keep her options open. She also had to seek the support of regional Rightist parties to remain in power.

The Tamil Nadu DMK, the Sikh Akalis, the Muslim League, the Independents were far from the Left-of-Centre but with her own strength of only 222 in the 522-member Lok Sabha she could not afford to alienate them. These groups wanted to know what they would get in return for supporting her. The DMK wanted industrial licences and Central grants-in-aid for the State they ruled; the Akalis wanted Mrs Gandhi's Congress party to support them in the Punjab Assembly to save their Government after the Jana Sangh withdrew from the coalition in the middle of 1970.

The Communist votes (43) were there for the asking. Both Left and Right factions preferred her to the old guard Congress which they considered 'reactionary and archaic' and they saw a chance of bringing about 'a revolution through the backdoor'. To be certain of their support Mrs Gandhi dropped the move to renew the Preventive Detention Act* which was anathema to the Communists (the Act was designed mainly to check subversion) though her Cabinet had approved it.

But it was difficult to please the Left Communists (Marxists). First they warned her (January 1970) against the dangers of her policy of 'Marxist-baiting and disrupting United Fronts in Kerala and West Bengal'. When their Government in Kerala fell (October 1969) they saw her hand in it, but continued to support her in 'every measure directed against the menace of the organization Congress'. The downfall of the Marxist dominated Ministry in West Bengal (March 1970) was the last straw. After that they were clearly hostile. So much so they went to the extent of supporting the old guard Congress party in the Kerala mid-term election (October 1970), though only a few months

*The first time the Communist Ministry came into power in Kerala in April 1957, its Chief Minister, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, quarrelled with Dr Bidhan Chander Roy, then West Bengal Chief Minister, over the extension of the Preventive Detention Act and walked out of a meeting convened by the then Home Minister, Pant. The Act aimed at detaining a person without trial for six months.

earlier their politburo had denounced that party as the 'Front of reaction and counter-revolution'.

But though Mrs Gandhi's honeymoon with the Left Communist Party did not last long, the other Communist Party, which is pro-Soviet has stood by her. The Right Communists realized that the polarization in the Congress party had not been on economic lines and that some persons on the old-guards' side were more progressive than some on her side. But as long as New Delhi's relations with Moscow are friendly they have a stake in supporting Mrs Gandhi. (Reluctantly they sided with Mrs Gandhi on 24 December 1969 to defeat in the Lok Sabha the demand for a Parliamentary Committee to investigate the failure of the then Central Food Minister, Jagjivan Ram, to file his tax returns for 10 years.)

The strategy of her opponent's Congress party was to force her to rely entirely on the support of the Communists to prove to the country—and the world—that she was a crypto-Communist. But she was clever enough not to join hands with the Communists at the Centre, though she did reach an electoral understanding with them in Kerala and West Bengal. In other States, there was cooperation.

There was pressure from the CPI to forge an alliance at the Centre—now that they were quoting Marxism more than Marx—but she resisted from doing so. First, her two close associates, Mishra and Jagjivan Ram, were against it and, secondly, the CPI was not popular in the Hindi-speaking States—Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and U.P.—from where she was expecting the maximum electoral support.

On the other hand, the old guard also tried to forge a joint front with the SSP and the PSP through Asoka Mehta, once with the PSP. But both parties refused; the image of the old guard was Rightist and they could not afford to soil their 'liberal' reputation by siding with them.

However, the old guard succeeded in reaching an understanding with the Jana Sangh and Swatantra, largely due to the efforts of Morarji Desai. 'This is my life's ambition,' he told me later.

Without the blare of publicity, he met Minoo Masani, the Swatantra Party's Chairman, and Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Jana Sangh chief, and drafted a unity manifesto which he later

showed to the other leaders of his party. The RSS Chief, Golwalkar, told me in New Delhi (June 1970) that he had given his blessings to the combination of the three parties.

The old guard placed the unity manifesto before their party's session in New Delhi (June 1970). Nijalingappa, the party's President, accused Mrs Gandhi's party of attacking the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra at the behest of the Soviet Union.

Desai, Asoka Mehta and a few others stressed the urgency of an 'arrangement' with other parties, 'for it is not the task of one party single-handedly or by remaining severely alone to meet the present crisis'. There were appeals to 'save the country from Communist subversion'. And the main attack was on Mrs Gandhi for having 'destroyed' the Congress party.

The rank and file, for long inured to the thought that the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra were reactionary parties, did not agree to their leader's proposal. The Gujarat party-men were the most critical; they clamoured for autonomy and won their demand. They had hotly fought the Swatantra in the 1967 poll telling the electorate that the Swatantra was a party of 'capitalists and reactionaries', and how could they now join hands with Swatantra men? It took much persuasion by Morarji Desai, who has a pre-eminent position in Gujarat, to bring them round to accept a loose electoral understanding.

Ultimately, it was resolved that the party should forge an alliance with 'national democratic parties' without spelling out who the parties were; it meant everything to everybody. But Desai was most disappointed. 'I shall not give up my mission to get the Jana Sangh, the Swatantra and my party to come together,' he said.

Nijalingappa said in an interview with me: 'The Swatantra men were once Congressmen; I would like to have them back. As far the Jana Sangh, they have vitality and the old men need that.'

Kamaraj also gave his blessings; he believed that the Jana Sangh was entrenched in northern India and hence must be associated. At Madurai in Tamil Nadu, he said (22 November 1970) that his party's alliance with the Swatantra could not be branded backward because the Swatantra leaders were 'patriots and past Congress leaders'.

'Your reputation is that of a Socialist, then why are you joining hands with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra?' I asked Kamaraj once. His reply was: 'First we must save the country from corruption and communism and then from communalism and capitalism.'

But before coming to this conclusion, he had tried to find out the possibilities of unity between the two Congress parties. Kamaraj met D.P. Mishra at his residence and inquired about the outcome of the appeal then pending in the Supreme Court against the election of Giri as President. Perhaps Kamaraj's idea was that if Giri were to be unseated, the two parties could start afresh as one—after all, it was over the choice of a candidate for the Presidential election that the party had split.

Mishra's guess after meeting Kamaraj was that he was himself interested in becoming President. (This opportunity never arose because the appeal against Giri was rejected by the Supreme Court.) Before leaving Mishra's residence, Kamaraj remarked: 'All those whom I have helped have gone against me.' He had in mind particularly Mrs Gandhi and Jagjivan Ram, who did owe their office to him. Mishra replied: 'That is the way of politics.'

Had Kamaraj's meeting remained secret, he might have picked up the thread of unity later but the Press came to know of it and he had to abandon the effort. However, Sanjiva Reddy sent word to Mrs Gandhi's camp that if a face-saving formula could be found the members from South India would join her side. The formula—suggested in the middle of 1970—was that Nijalingappa be made President of the re-united Congress party until the end of the year and Mrs Gandhi be accepted as Prime Minister.

The unity move did not succeed; Mrs Gandhi was willing to admit them to her fold on her terms. This was not to their liking.

The split at the Centre was bound to affect the States. This is what the Chief Ministers had feared when they tried their best to effect unity even at the last minute, and their fears have proved correct.

Mrs Gandhi could not afford to allow U.P., her home State which had 85 Lok Sabha seats, to stay with the Opposition.

From the beginning she commanded only 60 members in the 425-member Assembly but she was confident that defections from the other side would strengthen her and she was right.

She won over many members in a hectic tour of the State during which she visited many U.P. towns without even the knowledge of the then Chief Minister, C. B. Gupta. In fact, he complained to the Home Minister at that time that New Delhi should bear the expenses of her tour because she was on a 'political mission'. It was an unequal battle.

'I can't fight her because I am too old now and she is using money which is coming from all sources,' Gupta complained to me in an interview later.

The Bharatiya Kranti Dal leader, Charan Singh, a former Congress party leader, with 95 Assembly members behind him, was the man who counted most in U.P. at that time. He had helped her during the Presidential election and she expected him and Tripathi, her party's State Chief, to form the Government with the help of defectors.

But Gupta turned the tables on her by resigning and offering Charan Singh the State Chief Ministership. He thus outbid Tripathi, whose life's ambition was to be the Chief Minister.

Mrs Gandhi seemed to be losing the battle for U.P. but then D.P. Mishra moved in. He got in touch with Jagjivan Ram, who gave him authority to offer Charan Singh the Chief Ministership over the head of Tripathi. When Mishra reached Charan Singh's house in Lucknow, the U.P. leader was holding a Press conference in which he made it quite clear that he would be constituting the Ministry with the help of Gupta's party. Seeing Mishra, Charan Singh remarked: '*Chirian Chug Gaien Khet*' (the sparrows have already eaten up the field), meaning that he had chosen his side and all was over.

But Mishra kept on trying. Through a BKD member from Allahabad he informed other members of Charan Singh's party how he had offered their leader the Chief Ministership without conditions and how the offer had been declined. This worked, because most BKD members preferred to be on the side of Mrs Gandhi who had a better image than the leaders of the old guard, provided Charan Singh was made Chief Minister. Ultimately, Charan Singh came to terms with Mishra, who laid down one

condition: he must persuade the BKD to support Mrs Gandhi in Parliament. Charan Singh said he would and promised his personal support to her.

This promise kept him in office for about 10 months. But when he failed to get the BKD on Mrs Gandhi's side at the Centre, her party became restive. She herself could not afford to have an 'outsider' ruling U.P., particularly when she was toying with the idea of ordering a mid-term poll to cash in on her popular image.

Charan Singh, irritated by Tripathi's pinpricks, then gave her the chance she was seeking. He asked all of Mrs Gandhi's men in his Ministry to resign. On her advice, they refused, and instead wrote to the Governor that with their departure Charan Singh had lost the majority in the House and hence the right to be the Chief Minister.

The Governor asked for Charan Singh's resignation and insisted on his quitting even when the Opposition parties promised him their support to give him the required majority. Charan Singh said he was ready to call the State Assembly into session within a week to test his strength.

Charan Singh consulted on the phone Chagla, former Minister for Law and later External Affairs Minister, who was then in New Delhi and was advised not to resign so as to put the Governor in the wrong.

The Governor meanwhile sought the advice of the Attorney-General of India. He said that Charan Singh was not entitled to stay in office, but the State's Advocate-General held the opposite view. The Governor, at New Delhi's behest, accepted the Attorney-General's opinion, dismissed Charan Singh and recommended President's rule. Even without consulting any political party, the Governor said in his report to the Centre that he had come to the conclusion that no Ministry would be stable.

Strangely, New Delhi's Home Ministry sent to the Law Ministry for vetting the President's proclamation even before the Governor's report reached the Centre. When the Law Ministry—which had been warned by its Minister, Hanumanthaiyya, to keep away from the U.P. controversy because it was all 'politics'—protested against the President being taken for granted, the Home Ministry hurriedly withdrew the draft proclamation

Now that Charan Singh was ousted, Tripathi had all the opportunity to get members to defect from the other side. Dinesh Singh joined him to influence the Rajput community rulers, and according to Charan Singh, money was freely spent; Tripathi failed to win over enough men to get a majority in the Assembly.

Finally, he rang up Mrs Gandhi to inform her that she would have to approach members herself. She rebuked Tripathi on the phone and later told her associates that she never believed that he could have formed a Government.

When there was no other go, the Opposition parties, who had by this time formed themselves into a Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD), were allowed to form the Government. Nonetheless, in the process, Charan Singh lost the Chief Ministership and the old guard nominee, T. N. Singh, took over.

The U.P. campaign was marked by shady dealings and petty meanness, though as usual, Mrs Gandhi's men toiled to cover the unseemly struggle for power with talk of ideology. (Tripathi said on 4 October 1970 that 'if the people did not join the progressive forces, there would be bloodshed in the country'.)

The same lack of principles was evident in the ministry-making game in other States. In Gujarat, Mrs Gandhi's supporters tried to dislodge Hitendra Desai, the Chief Minister, through Baroda's Fatehsingh Gaekwad, a minister in the State Cabinet. But when these manoeuvres failed, eight of the former Maharaja's 12 supporters announced their allegiance to Hitendra Desai.

At one time, Hitendra Desai's majority in the 168-member house was reduced to two following the resignation of six members from the party. Subsequently, most of the 66 Swatantra members in the State legislature backed him, and some even joined his Congress party. Mrs Gandhi's only consolation was that she was able to organize an Opposition group in the State legislature.

In Mysore, Krishnappa, Mrs Gandhi's supporter in Parliament from that State, tried to break up the Ministry. But he was too small a man for the job and Nijalingappa's hold over his home State was too firm. However, Mrs Gandhi was able to win over secretly Veerendra Patil, the Chief Minister.

The terms settled with him were that he would stay with Nijalingappa as long as he was President of the old guard Congress

party because of his personal loyalties but would join Mrs Gandhi's camp after Nijalingappa's retirement.

Consequently, she advised some of her supporters, including the Ministers, to stay where they were for the duration; some of the State Ministers submitted to her their resignations for whatever use she could make of them.

Subsequently, the handling of the Mysore-Maharashtra border dispute annoyed Patil; Mrs Gandhi tended to favour Maharashtra because the State was on her side. Even though Patil was not enthusiastic about his party's decision to have an electoral alliance with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra, he had no alternative but to stay in it.

The old guard party also tried to foment trouble for Mrs Gandhi in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, but they failed; most legislators preferred to stay with the party in power—it was so rewarding.

It was evident that the old guard had not been able to make any inroad in her camp. She had a popular image and she was quite conscious of it.

Never had she been so powerful in the country as now and in her own party she was supreme. Chavan and Jagjivan Ram are leaders in their own right but both looked to her for instructions. They may vie with each other for the Number Two position but never for the Number One, which is unassailably Mrs. Gandhi's.

As Nijalingappa said to prove his point that she was 'everything' in the other Congress. 'The Congress party President would never stand up when the Prime Minister came to attend the party's meeting; I never did, but Jagjivan Ram has degraded the office by standing up whenever Mrs Gandhi enters.' He said she had criticized bossism in the old Congress party; but in her own party it was as evident.

Indeed, there was more of it. Power was in the hands of a few in the old party; it was held by even fewer in hers. Mrs Gandhi, Mishra and Jagjivan Ram made what the Syndicate in the old party, punning on Mrs Gandhi's first name, called 'Indicate'. They selected the members of the Congress party's Working Committee at the Bombay session before going through the formality of an election.

In fact, when they were making some selection, Chavan walked

into the room. The three were embarrassed; however Mishra said: 'We are finalizing the list of names for the Working Committee. You also draw up your chair.' Chavan said: 'You three can finalize it,' and he withdrew.

The three decided to have in the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board, which selected the party's candidates for elections, only those who were fully loyal to Mrs Gandhi. 'We should not have Bangalore experience again,' said Mishra.

Both Mishra and Jagjivan Ram were able to keep ex-Communists out of the Working Committee. The 'Young Turks' were also excluded because they were suspected of being more loyal to Chavan, than to Mrs Gandhi—and Chavan was still not forgiven for supporting the old guard's candidate in the Presidential election.

The 'Young Turks' later retaliated by building up a campaign against Jagjivan Ram, saying that he must give up one or the other of two offices: Congress Presidentship or his Ministership. Mrs Gandhi appeared to be with them. After a meeting of the Working Committee, she tactfully told him that he appeared to have too heavy a burden to carry as Minister and Congress President.

There was speculation in the Press that he might be eased out of the Cabinet post. But he was not one to give up either office which gave him immense power and patronage. Mrs Gandhi later mentioned to Siddhartha Ray, a youthful West Bengal leader, that Jagjivan Ram was not willing to give up either of his posts.

Though he told Mishra that he would leave the Party Presidentship if he were given a major portfolio like External Affairs, Defence or Finance, Jagjivan Ram made no move to step down even after he was allotted Defence in July 1970.

In fact, Jagjivan Ram was not Mrs Gandhi's original choice for the party post; she had wanted to give it to Sanjivayya, a former President of the old Congress party. But Brahmanna Reddy, the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, opposed the proposal, because they were rivals in Andhra. Reddy, however, agreed to Sanjivayya's inclusion in the Central Cabinet; 'it was the lesser evil,' he said later.

After Sanjivayya's name was dropped, Mrs Gandhi favoured Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed; but he was not willing to take up the

party post if it was to be at the cost of his Ministership. When pressed he said he would consider the offer, but later excused himself on grounds of health.

Mishra was another candidate suggested, but he wanted to remain backstage—politics was a game he enjoyed sheeting; in any case the Supreme Court had debarred him from contesting any election for six years because it held him guilty of 'unfair practices' in the 1962 election to the State Assembly in Madhya Pradesh, where he was Chief Minister.

Jagjivan Ram was more his choice than Mrs Gandhi's. When Mishra felt that Jagjivan Ram had failed to establish the party in the field, the two fell out.

* * *

Mrs Gandhi has herself woefully noted that her party's organization is confined to New Delhi and the State capitals; it has no roots in the villages. It lacks cadres to go to the people in the countryside to explain her programme or organize support for her; she could rely only on the former Communists in her party or members of the Right Communist Party to refurbish her Leftist image, particularly after the 'Young Turks' had been won over by Chavan.

Her group, united during her fight against the party bosses, is now split by intrigues for power and office. The fact that she has lost the majority in the Lok Sabha has accentuated her difficulties.

This has had an effect on the Government which seems to be more eager to rule than to govern, to stay in power than take the risk of bold decisions. Much of her time appears to be spent on planning strategies to demolish her opponents; the decisions of the Government have become ad hoc, weakened further by behind-the-scenes compromises.

A scapegoat had to be found for failures of policy. Mrs Gandhi's supporters found one—the bureaucracy. No doubt it has expanded beyond proportion, from 1·4 million in 1947 to 3 million in 1970, and is slow and often inefficient. But to some extent, the archaic and stringent rules and regulations of the Government are to blame for the slow disposal of

(Once Nehru was so exasperated by the office procedures that he wanted all the manuals to be brought to him. One morning he found a table in his room piled with books of varying sizes—they were the manuals of Government service. He just returned them without making any changes.)

But to a larger extent, the pre-independence feeling that the Government was different from the people has continued to cloud the thinking of at least the lower echelons of bureaucracy.

Low salaries and rising prices only make them overemphasize the rules but some of them shortcircuit them for 'pecuniary consideration'. Senior officials, on the other hand, have made a fetish of the rules; they are expert in passing the buck and refusing to take responsibility because of the fear of attack by MPs either in the House or in Parliamentary Committees.

There is nothing to make them devoted to work—neither incentive nor nationalist fervour nor even good standards set by Ministers.

(Once when Pant, then Home Minister, urged the top officials to improve the tone of work and avoid the temptation of bribery, H.M. Patel, then Defence Secretary, joined issue with him by saying that civil servants could do nothing when the Ministers themselves were busy politicking and making money.)

Mrs Gandhi's supporters have increasingly criticized the bureaucracy for its failure to deliver the goods; the slow progress is invariably attributed to the civil service which is said to have no stakes in the government's programmes. Mrs Gandhi herself has said many a time that the civil service should have a 'commitment'.

Once when I asked her at a meeting of editors whether by commitment she meant loyalty to a particular ideology, party or individual, she explained that she never meant that officials should be doctrinaire in their approach or committed to a party or person. What she had in mind was that public servants should believe in the principles which were enshrined in the Constitution. She cited the example of Government servants practising untouchability which is banned under the Constitution. She, however, added that the persons posted at public sector undertakings should have faith in the philosophy of the public sector.

Later, Jagjivan Ram who had referred to the 'neutrality' of the Civil Service as a 'hindrance' in his speech as the Congress party President (December 1969) elaborated the same viewpoint by alleging that the upper caste Government employees were practising untouchability in the secretariat by having separate drinking water pitchers for themselves.

Asked whether 'commitment' included prohibition because that was one of the 'Directive Principles' of the Constitution, Jagjivan Ram laughingly said: 'That would be hard to implement.'

* * *

'Commitment' of the Civil Service was necessary to carry out the 10-point economic programme which Mrs Gandhi championed to sustain her 'progressive' image, and she sought early action to prove to the people that with the old guard not there to obstruct her it could be carried out. [The election manifesto that the Congress (R) issued on 24, January 1971 did not talk about Civil Service 'commitment' but stressed the need to make the 'administrative system' capable of speeding up implementation.]

Though she was critical of the Civil Service, Mrs Gandhi sought its suggestions to implement one of the proposals in the 10-point programme: to put a ceiling on urban property.* The Law Ministry advised her that it would be legally far easier to reduce property disparity through deterrent estate duty and heavy wealth tax. But for her this was not 'radical' enough and she rejected it.

Instead, she appointed a working group of six senior Secretaries of the Central Government to make recommendations. They suggested a ceiling on property in towns with a population of 100,000 or more on the basis of value, not area. 'The exact monetary ceiling has to be a political decision,' they said.

The Cabinet fixed a limit of Rs 5 lakhs (£28,000) per family consisting of husband, wife and minor children. However, her radical supporters proposed the abolition of private property as

*Chavan announced in Parliament on 2 December 1970 that the Government was committed to the principle of imposing a ceiling on incomes

such and the deletion of Article 31 of the Constitution which the Supreme Court had interpreted as meaning that property was a 'fundamental right' which Parliament could not touch.

Mrs Gandhi also openly talked about the Constitution coming in the way of her proposal for a ceiling on property. And when the election manifesto of her party was prepared, this point figured in the draft.

But most Chief Ministers opposed it. Naik from Maharashtra expressed concern over the impression gaining ground that Mrs. Gandhi was wanting to take away an individual's house, shop or farm. Another Chief Minister quoted Machiavelli: 'Men will sooner forgive the killing of their relatives than the confiscation of their property.'

The Secretaries had reported that 'property' came under the definition of 'land', which was a State subject and, therefore, it would require to be ratified by the State Assemblies. (Such a law can be framed even if two States ask for it, but the others are then free to adopt it or not.)

Most State Governments either rejected the Central suggestion or gave a non-committal reply. A few States like Punjab dominated by rural interests saw this as an opportunity to hit the urbanites and, therefore, welcome it. But legislation for the country as a whole had to be shelved.

To keep the pot of ideology boiling, Mrs Gandhi then hurried through the proposal to abolish the privy purses and privileges of the princes—again one of the points of her economic programme. Behind this measure was also the sanction of the undivided Congress party which had on 24 June 1967 adopted a Young Turk's non-official amendment to the economic resolution seeking to abolish not only the princes' privileges but also privy purses. Chavan's hand was suspected behind this.

A month earlier, the Congress Working Committee had stopped only just short of abolishing the privy purses and sought to declare them as income from an office of profit—a formula which D.P. Mishra repeated later—and thus subject to tax.

The institution of the ex-rulers (Maharajas, Nawabs and the like who had once their own kingdoms under the overall tutelage of the British) was as old as India's independence. Before the English left, they gave them the choice to merge their states with

India or Pakistan, depending on geographical proximity, or remain independent. As many as 554 States* preferred to integrate with India, mostly through the then Home Minister Sardar Patel's tact and arm-twisting.

But, in return, the Government of India guaranteed through the Constitution payment of privy purses totalling Rs 5.80 crores (£3.2 million). This had been reduced to Rs 3 crores (£1.6 million) in September 1970 because with the death of an ex-ruler, his successor would get only about half.

The ex-rulers were also extended privileges: immunity from prosecution, exemption from income tax, wealth tax, estate duty, local taxes and requisition of property, refund of excise duty, public holidays on birthdays, recognition of titles, military honours, free driving licences and personal number plates, free medical attention, own flags, gun salutes, armed guards and escort and postal and telegraph concessions.

Even in those days, some persons and parties criticized the 'generous terms given to the ex-rulers', and, as time passed, they were increasingly attacked. In 1953, Nehru appealed to 100 important ex-rulers to volunteer a 10 per cent cut in their purses but none agreed. During the 1962 war against China, some ex-rulers donated 10 per cent or even more of their purses to the exchequer but this was only for a short period. Therefore, they evoked very little sympathy in the average man's heart.

When the Congress party was still undivided, Mrs Gandhi asked Chavan, then Home Minister, to negotiate a settlement with the ex-rulers on the basis of compensation, totalling about Rs 15 crores (£ 8 million). However, they did not agree to the terms offered. Their representative, V. Shankar, former Defence Secretary, told me that there would have been an agreement between the ex-rulers and the Government but for Mrs Gandhi's fear to annoy Young Turks by making any compromise.

After the failure of the talks, Mrs Gandhi, pushed by her radical

*The rulers of Travancore, Junagadh (Gujarat), Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Mysore refused to join India. Travancore merged with India in 1949. Hyderabad, which had been a princely state, was taken over by the Indian army in 1948. Jammu and Kashmir became a disputed area, against which New Delhi took 'police action', merged with India in November 1948.

supporters, had no choice except to bring a Bill before Parliament. Since it was a Constitution Amendment Bill, it required a two-thirds majority of those present and voting in each of the two Houses of Parliament.

The Lok Sabha passed it by 339 against 154 and gave it more than the required majority; the Communists, the PSP, the SSP, the DMK and some Independents, in addition to Mrs Gandhi's Congress party, voted in its favour.

The Old Guard Congress party joined hands with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra in voting against it; so also did some BKD members and Independents. When asked to explain their opposition to the programme which they had themselves accepted earlier, Kamaraj said that theirs was only a one-point programme: to oust Mrs Gandhi; adding that she too had only a one-point programme—to stay in power.

The Bill failed by one vote (149 against 75) to get the required two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha. (The Chairman of the House, Gopal Swarup Pathak, who is also the Vice-President, was apparently so upset that he took more than half an hour to announce the Government's defeat.)

After the rejection of the Bill, some Ministers told Mrs Gandhi to use the opportunity to resume talks with the ex-rulers who, knowing that the Government meant business, would be more amenable. But, by this time, she had made up her mind to de-recognize the rulers through an executive order; she had been informed earlier by Govinda Menon, the late Law Minister, that the Government could issue such an order under the Constitution.

Just before lunchtime on 5 September 1970—when the Rajya Sabha debate was only half way through—Mrs Gandhi returned to her room in Parliament House and asked her Joint Secretary, Bishen Tandon, to prepare a draft Presidential Order to de-recognize the ex-rulers. The Home Ministry's officials were summoned to assist. Mrs Gandhi had anticipated the mood of the Upper House and she did not want to lose any time.

A day later she was scheduled to leave for Lusaka where she was leading the Indian delegation to the Fourth Non-Aligned Conference. 'How could she have faced the world dignitaries after the defeat on the Privy Purse legislation?' explained one

of her supporters when asked why she hurried through the order.

Soon after the Government's defeat in the Rajya Sabha, Mrs Gandhi had convened a meeting of the Cabinet's Political Affairs Committee but she asked for no discussion on what she had decided. By that time, she had also obtained the opinion of the Attorney-General of India, Niren De, who advised that the Government could abolish privy purses through an executive order. The Law Ministry was kept out of the picture.

At this meeting, the Law Secretary was present. He was not happy over the decision and told Chavan, then Home Minister, that the Government's action was *mala fide*. A day later (6 September) he wrote a letter to the Home Secretary to warn the Government that the Supreme Court might throw out the order.

The Cabinet at which the formal decision to de-recognize the ex-rulers was taken met 10 hours later. In fact, by the time it met (10.30 p.m.) a messenger had left with the order for Hyderabad to get the formal approval of the President, who was there then.

The ex-rulers challenged the order in the Supreme Court. While the case was in progress, a few remarks made by the judges led the Government to believe that it might lose. Niren De, who had been the Government's adviser in place of the Law Ministry, also felt the same way. He insinuated in the Court that the judges were set against the Government's measure and repeated the same view at one of the meetings of the Cabinet's Political Affairs Committee.

At least one official present at the meeting took exception to that remark. Mrs Gandhi did not share Niren De's fears although she felt that the judgment might go against the Government.

Could anything be done at that late hour? The Law Ministry was now brought into the picture. Its advice was that there should be either a new order to re-recognize the ex-rulers or a fresh Bill to amend the Constitution. The fear was that the Supreme Court might pass strictures against the Government.

Mrs Gandhi did not agree to re-recognize the ex-rulers—politically it was unexpedient. She was willing to introduce a fresh Bill in Parliament, but her whips in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha warned her that it would be difficult to muster even the strength which they were able to get the first time.

The Government lost the privy purses case (15 December 1970) in the Supreme Court which held the Presidential Order abolishing princely privileges ultra vires of the Constitution. Eight of the eleven judges observed that the Government could not extend the power given under the Constitution to nominate a successor to an ex-ruler to abolish the institution itself.

The then Chief Justice, Hidayatullah, was most critical in his judgment. He said: 'The President cannot claim total immunity over his acts from the scrutiny of the Court. Neither the paramountcy of the Grand Moghul who could give Subedarships to his Generals as he pleased nor the paramountcy of the British Crown has descended to the President.'

While restoring the privy purses of the ex-rulers, the Supreme Court held the privy purse as property. In an earlier judgment, the Court had declared property as a fundamental right which Parliament could not abridge or abrogate. The Government was peeved over this portion of judgment but it was Niren De who had brought in extraneous issues like property despite the hints of judges not to do so.

The Old Guard Congress party, the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra, which had opposed the Bill, hailed the Supreme Court's decision as a vindication of their stand. However, Mrs Gandhi's Congress party, the Communists, the PSP and the SSP wanted the Government to take alternative steps to abolish the privy purses and privileges.

Should another Constituent Assembly be convened to re-write some portions of the Constitution? Should the Supreme Court be 'packed' to get a favourable verdict in future? Or should there be a fresh Bill to amend the Constitution? These were the questions which the Government considered endlessly. Mrs Gandhi gave vent to her feelings in the Lok Sabha (16 December 1970): 'The Constitution cannot be static and if it is necessary to change it we shall change it.' However, the Law Ministry suggested that the best course would be to introduce a fresh Bill to amend the Constitution.

For Mrs Gandhi's critics, it was not so much their love for the ex-rulers which made them deplore their de-recognition as the way it was done. Some thought that it was undemocratic to issue a Presidential Order to get through a proposal after Parlia-

ment had failed to approve it. And some honestly believed that the promises given to the ex-rulers should be honoured; M.C. Chagla was one of them and he had taken this stand when he was in the Cabinet. 'Even foreign countries will stop having faith in our word,' he had argued then, if the pledges to the princes were not kept.

To the common man, however, legal subtleties did not matter; his sympathy was not with the ex-rulers. Mrs Gandhi was conscious that popular opinion was behind her on this point.

* * *

Those were the days when she seriously thought of having a mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha (one year ahead of schedule). But her advisers—D.P. Mishra on the political side and her Secretary, P.N. Haksar, on the official—were still not completely in favour of dissolving Parliament. They wanted to assess her personal popularity, and they got proof of this when in the Kerala election (18 September) her Congress party won 30 seats as against 6 the undivided party had won earlier.

In fact, Mishra wrote a letter to Mrs Gandhi the evening he heard the results, advising her to seek a mid-term election to Parliament. He wanted her to take advantage of the wind blowing in her favour. He also thought that a mid-term poll would de-link State and Central politics (elections to the State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha are usually held simultaneously every five years) so that the intrigues and jealousies of State politicians would not plague her at the Centre.

The second point appealed to her, and she decided to have a poll in early 1971 but deferred its announcement till the end of the winter session of Parliament.

Many MPs on Mrs Gandhi's side were against the shortening of their term by one year. And she lost first U.P. and then Bihar to the Opposition. Her supporters argued that the Opposition Governments in the two States, which had the longest share of the Lok Sabha seats, could use official machinery during the elections and thus put Mrs Gandhi's Congress at a great disadvantage.

They also argued that the party had no proper organization in the States. D.P. Mishra blamed Jagjivan Ram for sticking to

Ministership and ignoring the organizational side. He suggested that Mrs Gandhi should take over the Congress party's Presidentship. But she did not want to annoy Jagjivan Ram, particularly at a time when she had decided to go to the electorate because his hold over the Harijans was almost absolute. Therefore, she never specifically asked Jagjivan Ram to give up the party's Presidentship, though she dropped hints more than once.

Some of her party members also advised her against a mid-term poll on the ground that while in the 1967 election the combined Congress party won nearly 150 seats in the Lok Sabha with a margin of only 500-odd votes, now that the Congress party votes were to be split, most of those seats might go to the Opposition.

The MPs were equally afraid of election expenses (a Lok Sabha election costs each roughly Rs 2 lakhs or £11,000 against a legal limit of Rs 35,000 or a little less than £2,000) although it was an open secret that foreign money would pour in as had happened during the 1967 poll.

The charge of foreign money coming to India during the last election was true. The Central Intelligence Bureau had inquired into the nature and extent of foreign assistance and had found that many countries had provided funds through 'overt and covert' channels, including institutions and individuals.

The Home Ministry examined the report and came to the conclusion that 'several countries have been providing financial assistance for diverse activities.' The Ministry observed: 'Financial assistance from Russian and American sources has been, however, more sustained and much larger as compared to such assistance from other countries.*'

Other points recorded by the Ministry were:

The main objection against some instances of such overt assistance had been that funds had been provided with ul-

*The U.S. Information Centres were suspected of 'giving money' to some individuals and organizations in the country and therefore were ordered to close down from 16 May 1970. The directive was that no cultural posts could be allowed at places where the Embassies concerned had no Consular offices. Some connected the step with New Delhi's stoppage of the construction of an unauthorized building of the Soviet Cultural Centre in Trivandrum, in Kerala, a few months earlier.

terior motives. Thus, in the case of some American assistance it was found that the ultimate source of funds was the C.I.A. Two courses of action were considered appropriate in regard to the various forms of overt assistance. One was that foreign foundations and organizations which had received funds reasonably suspected to have originated from intelligence agencies, such as the C.I.A., should not be permitted to continue their activities or extend any further financial assistance to institutions, organizations or individuals in this country, irrespective of the purpose for which such assistance may have been extended in the past. This was on the analogy of the decision taken by the Government in case of the Asia Foundation. The second course of action considered appropriate was that receipt of donations and other forms of financial assistance from foreign sources should be subject by fresh legislation to more rigorous control and scrutiny.

The Government decided that in order to minimize the dependence of Indian organizations and institutions on foreign financial support, the Indian Social Sciences Research Council (already constituted) should start providing assistance for research in social sciences.

It was discovered that overt assistance was possible in one or more of the following ways.

Direct Payment: In foreign currency outside the country to selected individuals for being passed on to political or other organizations for whom it is meant.

By foreign embassies located in India or organizations or prominent individuals associated with political parties

Indirect Payment: Through commission on sale of literature imported from abroad.

Subventions paid out of trade profits by bilateral understanding between commercial enterprises and political parties.

Advertisement charges, translation charges, etc., to newspapers and periodicals at very high rates.

A draft bill to impose suitable restrictions on receipts of funds

from abroad was prepared and submitted to the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet.

The bill sought to impose 'suitable restrictions on receipt (except by Government) of different kinds of assistance from foreign organizations, agencies or individuals otherwise than in the course of ordinary business transactions.

'The assistance which would come within the scope of restrictions can comprise (1) any contribution or donation or other assistance in cash, whether in Indian or foreign currency, or any article other than of trifling value and (2) foreign hospitality, including offer of free or concessional passage, free boarding, lodging, transport or medical aid, except (a) hospitality of a purely casual nature or (b) acceptance of facilities easily available to all residents of the host country, for example, medical attendance in pursuance of any scheme of free medical assistance or (c) concessions of a general nature such as concessional air fares for students.

'Assistance or hospitality from the following sources will be brought within the scope of the legislation:

1. Government of any foreign country or territory.
2. A foreign company.
3. A body corporate not being a foreign company incorporated in a foreign country or territory.
4. A trade union in any foreign country or territory.
5. A foundation, society, club or other association of individuals.
6. A citizen of a foreign country.'

Broadly speaking, there were three types of controls visualized in the legislation: (1) outright prohibition; (2) prior permission; and (3) intimation regarding receipt of foreign assistance.

The bill was to be discussed with the Opposition leaders but meanwhile Mrs Gandhi had decided to have a mid-term poll. During the winter session (November-December 1970) of Parliament this became an open secret.

Not many members were happy over the prospects of getting their term reduced by one year. There was also the uncertainty of getting re-elected. A few of them, belonging to both factions

of the Congress, talked of a rapprochement between the two. Their number was small but they represented the sentiments of most numbers of both sides. (In fact, the efforts to unify the two factions had never stopped.)

On Mrs Gandhi's side only backbenchers were in support of this but on the other side Ram Subhag Singh, who had not demolished all bridges behind him and had Chavan as his link, came more or less into the open in favour of reuniting the party. S.K. Patil also backed it particularly after his 'friends in Bombay', as he put it, told him to do so.

Mannubhai Shah, once a Union Minister, who was genuinely concerned over the split in the Congress party, used his old contacts to see if the twain could still meet; some of Mrs Gandhi's supporters even suspected him of bargaining for a ministership.

* * *

Had Mrs Gandhi encouraged these efforts, unity might have been possible. Among the old guard some were in favour of jettisoning even persons like Morarji Desai, S.K. Patil and Atulya Ghosh, who she had said repeatedly were 'Rightists' if that was the price to be paid. But no face-saving formula was offered by Mrs Gandhi. She wanted them to crawl and even then not to be sure of the prize.

When the unity efforts did not fructify, Desai moved in. He had not given up the efforts to bring about his party's alliance with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra. He knew it was not possible to combine all of them into one party—the Democratic Nationalist Party he had envisaged. He also knew that a formal political alliance was not possible, even though he tried to have a joint co-ordination committee of the three parties at the Centre. (It is said that he wanted to be its chairman.)

But he was successful at his party's Lucknow session (6 December 1970) to have it endorse a resolution which authorized the old guard Congress party President to have electoral adjustments with democratic parties, notably the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh. (Newspapers gave the name of 'Grand Alliance' to the combination.)

Desai's argument was, 'we cannot win elections alone.' Ram

Subhag Singh, who spoke against the alliance, said that it was a tragedy that the party had accepted its weakness even before trying its strength in the field. Nijalingappa was not happy over the alliance but felt that it would be 'difficult' for his party to win alone. Kamaraj thought that the Jana Sangh was the only party with vitality in northern India. Desai won. His party accepted 'defeat' without even going to the polls.

It was strange that the old guard, who had vehemently denied having had any truck with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra at the time of the Presidential election because they were 'communalist and reactionary', should have changed their opinion in a year's time. The split was only that old.

In Mrs Gandhi's quiver, this was another arrow; she could say that the old guard never believed in the Congress party's ideology and hence the parting of the ways with them had become inevitable.

The old guard's alliance with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra had a demoralizing effect at many places, particularly in Gujarat, where two State Ministers resigned from the Cabinet forthwith and in Mysore where the Syndicate lost in the prestigious municipal elections in Bangalore.

This was the time when Mrs Gandhi decided to push her advantage to the maximum; the Opposition appeared to be in disarray. To her distress, the Bihar Ministry led by her party fell during those days (18 December 1970). But this did not daunt her; she counted her pluses and minuses and found that she was in an advantageous position. The wind was blowing in her favour.

Her party had won most of the bye-elections held since the split; the contest over nine Assembly seats in 1970 showed that her candidates secured 52.98 per cent of the votes as against 42.76 per cent earlier for the united Congress. The old guard party was nowhere near; in fact, her party had come to be recognized as the real Congress party.

Many members from the other Congress party were joining her camp at different levels, one of the Syndicate's trusted men, the party's Secretary, Venkatsubbiah, sent a conciliatory message in December and ultimately joined her party on 25 January 1971. Many more were in the process of jumping on to her band-wagon. Nothing succeeds like success.

The first given indication about the mid-term poll was her written query to find out when the census process would be over. The census was scheduled for February and it usually took more than a month to have a count and then a re-check. But that was not an impassable hurdle; the census could be postponed by a month.

The Chief Ministers who met Mrs Gandhi those days got the impression that the announcement was round the corner. It was the Andhra Chief Minister, Brahamanand Reddy, who spilled the beans and told his followers openly to get ready for a fresh election.

Once Mrs Gandhi decided on the date, the rest was a mere formality. Under the Constitution, it is on advice of the Prime Minister in consultation with the Council of Ministers that the President acts. On 27 December evening, Mrs Gandhi, armed with the approval of her loyal Cabinet, went to Giri to suggest a mid-term poll. His reported reply was that 27 December was an auspicious day because on that day fell his wedding anniversary.

(The Prime Minister met the President three days earlier and reportedly prepared him for the announcement, but constitutionally it was not a correct procedure because such an advice has to be tendered by the Prime Minister after a formal approval of the Cabinet.)

On the verge of the Congress party's split, the Law Ministry had done an exercise to find out whether the advice of a Prime Minister whose party had lost the majority in the Lok Sabha was binding on the President; it was then concluded that he could reject or accept it at his discretion. Before the Law Ministry was the example of Madhya Pradesh. There the Governor did not follow the informed recommendation of D P. Mishra, then Chief Minister, to dissolve the State Assembly because he had lost his majority in the legislature.

The Law Ministry observed that the Madhya Pradesh Governor was right in using his discretion and rejecting the advice as the Chief Minister had lost his majority in the House. Similarly, in the case of Parliament, the Prime Minister's advice would have been binding on the President if she had a majority in the Lok Sabha; otherwise the President would exercise his discretion.

This may explain why the Rashtrapati Bhavan communique announcing the dissolution of Parliament said that the President* had accepted Mrs Gandhi's recommendation 'after careful consideration'. But reports suggest that 'careful consideration' took no time at all. The advice was given around 8 P.M., the decision was announced soon after. Her meeting with the President lasted 25 minutes and the announcement that Parliament would be dissolved was included in the 9 P.M. radio news bulletin.

The announcement hastened the process of alliances. The old guard leaders were anxious to rub off the label of Rightists which stuck to them in the popular mind. One of their leaders, Chander Bhan Gupta, through good offices of the Samyukta Socialist Party leader Raj Narain, a Rajya Sabha member, roped in the SSP, a party with a Leftist image. The Rightist Swatantra was very unhappy over this alliance but could not withdraw from the joint front at that late hour.

However, the party's leader, Masani, protested against the reported pronouncement of the SSP Chairman, Madhu Limaye, that the 'Grand Alliance' should try to have 'adjustments' with the CPI (Marxists). 'How can we and the Communists be on the same side,' said Masani. 'I want them to have a Leftist image so as to carry conviction with the electorate,' Madhu Limaye told me.

The Jana Sangh sat pretty because it was overconfident of its strength. But it was proved when Tribhuvan Singh, the U.P. Chief Minister, lost the Assembly by-election by 16,000 votes (25 January 1971) in Maniram, a Jana Sangh stronghold, that it did not have popular support. Some old guard leaders, particularly Sanjiva Reddy, wondered whether they had done well in joining hands with the Jana Sangh.

Mrs Gandhi was supreme in her own party and did not yield to the chiding and pressures of the Communists to forge a union of Leftist forces. She wanted her party to come back with a majority in its own right; she had known from her experience since the split that a minority Government could neither act boldly nor administer well.

*Subsequently, towards the middle of January, Mrs Gandhi wrote a letter to Giri saying that she had entrusted to D.P. Mishra the matter of fielding his son as their party's candidate from Madhya Pradesh.

In fact, she saw to it that in her own party, she had the maximum number of trusted followers in Parliament. Even though Jagjivan Ram and Chavan had their men from their home States, Bihar and Maharashtra respectively, nominated (Jagjivan Ram sent through Bali Ram Bhagat, a Central Minister, a message to Mrs Gandhi that he would resign if his list from Bihar was not accepted), she did not allow them to have their way in the rest of India. It was clear then that she did not trust them. But there was little that they could do, she was too strong for them. She still needed them, but they needed her more. At best they were only sectional leaders while she had emerged as a national figure.

Even Nijalingappa woefully observed on 27 January 1971 during his talk with me: 'If she had only stayed with us, we would have done wonders with the country's development.'

But that thought has come over a year too late. Now the two Congresses have taken up positions: the old guard party with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra and the Samyukta Socialist Party on one side, Mrs Gandhi's group with the support of the Right Communists on the other. Also with her are some regional communal organizations like the Kerala Muslim League which, by strange logic, she said are secular. (At the Kerala Muslim League Conference in Palghat on 25 April 1970, the photographs of Ayub Khan, former President of Pakistan, were on display.)

This division does not represent any polarization, although her own image is that of left of centre. Both sides have Rightists and Leftists in their midst, as in the old undivided party, and more prolific, opportunists.

In days to come Mrs Gandhi will go on repeating her ten-point programme which, like the Ten Commandments of Moses, is meant more to invoke faith than effort credulity than challenge. Her attacks on her opponents for having wired hands with 'communists' will also increase. On the other hand, the old guard Congress party and its allies will go on plugging the line that she is a 'Communist' and a dictator.

Her advantage is that she looks as if having a programme, however wanting in some respects, will be her opponents sound too negative, too personal. Once I asked her (whether the Congress party was still under her) as ever her stare.

tion to the party bosses. She said: 'You see, here is a question of whom the people want; my position among the people is uncontested.'

Nonetheless, in the midst of party rivalries and manoeuvres, the country's economic development has lagged behind; disillusionment and frustration and their inevitable sequel—violence*—have begun engulfing certain areas. People have started feeling insecure. They look for some umbrella, some political party to give them a sense of security. This was bound to happen when an organization like the Congress party, which provided a secure platform, split asunder.

The wherewithal of economic development are these; power, steel, roads, ports and engineers. In absolute numbers, progress has not been too bad. But lack of discipline on the one hand and the abnormal increase in population on the other have reduced productivity and made gains minimal.

Therefore, the seventies find India troubled, uncertain and overwhelmed with its problems. These are indeed critical times for the country. What is the way out? Which way to turn: to democracy or something else?

Except for a few extreme Communists all parties are committed to the ballot box, and the people have come to have a stake in it after four general elections since Independence. Where the Cassandras go wrong is in equating individuals and their doings with the parliamentary system as such.

Whatever disillusionment, Parliament and the Assemblies are there for people of all political shades and faiths to ventilate their grievances to reach a consensus. The watch-dogs of democracy, the Press and the judiciary, are functioning freely and without hindrance.

Whether these institutions will last and if they do now for long will depend on the reply to the question: Who will win? Or, perhaps more appropriately, it should be, what will the party or parties who win do after winning?

*The Intelligence reports reaching the Central Government indicate that the Congress (R) and the CPI are encouraging and harbouring the Naxalites.

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